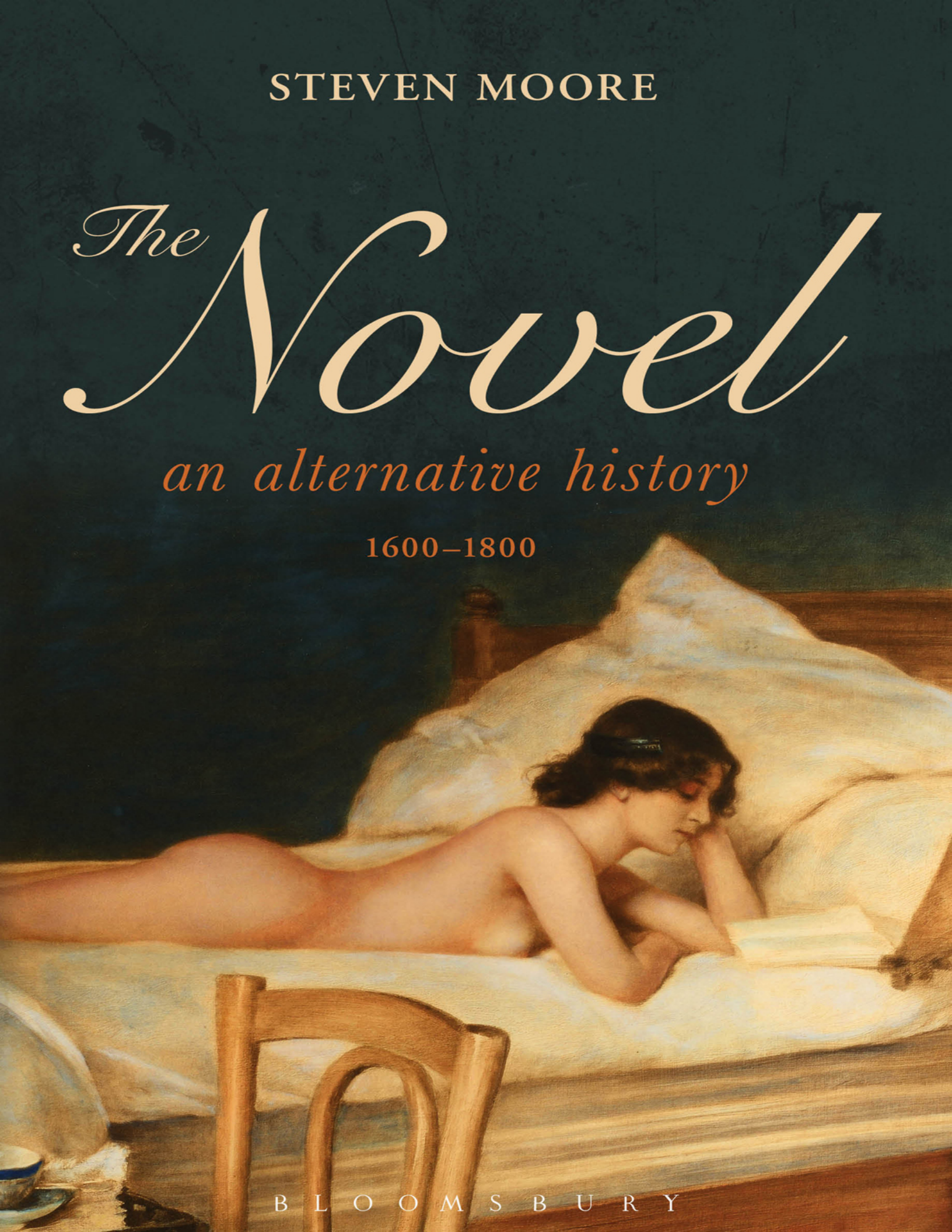
STEVEN MOORE

The Novel

an alternative history

1600–1800



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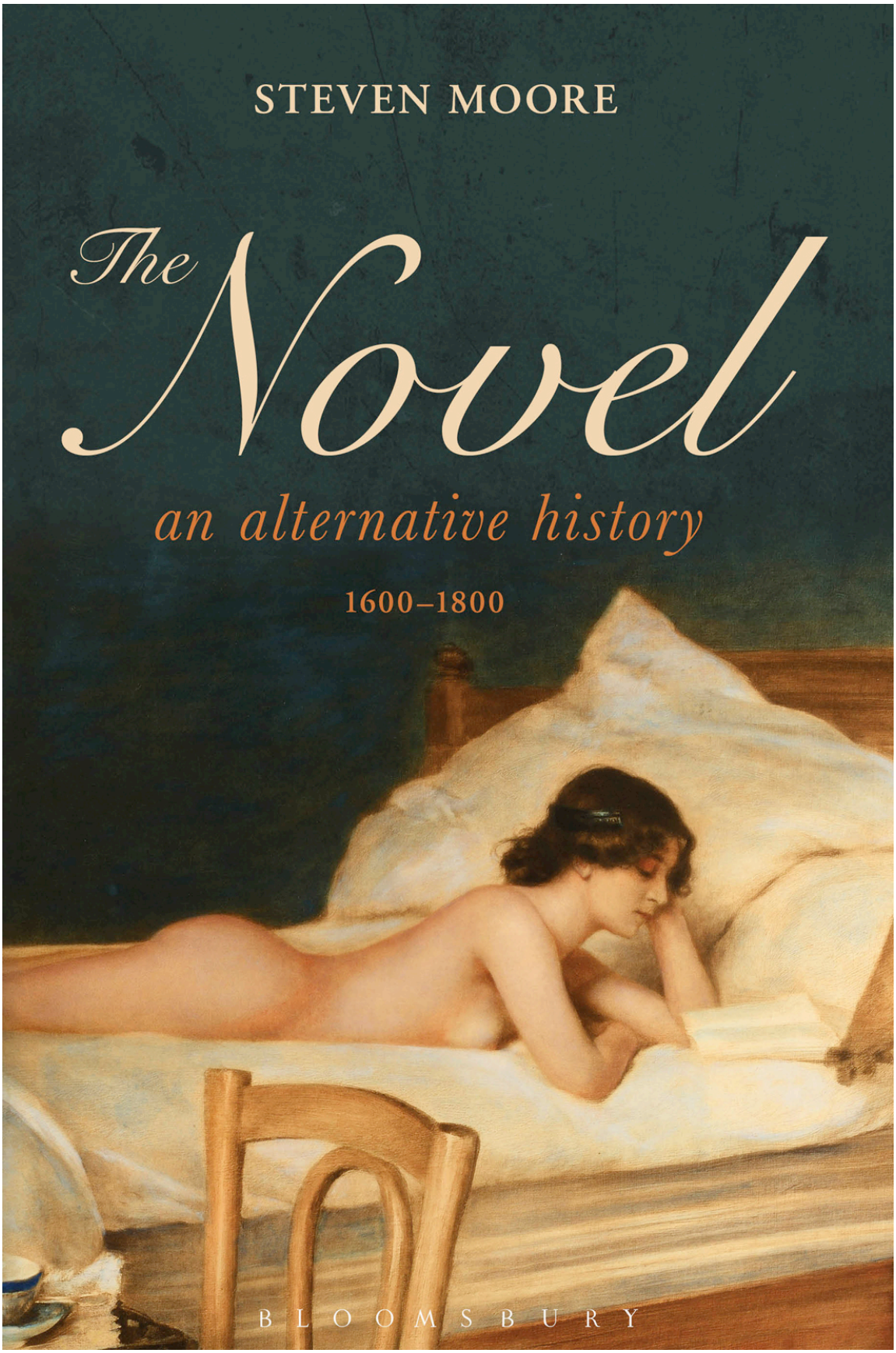

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THE NOVEL

An Alternative History

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THE NOVEL

An Alternative History

1600 to 1800

STEVEN MOORE

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Preface

> Yet once again, ye Muses! once again
> Saddle the Hyppogryf! and wing my way
> Where regions of romance their charms display.
> —Wieland's *Oberon*

Since this volume picks up where the previous one left off, I'll ask the reader to refer to that volume's truculent introduction for my premises and methodology. For reasons explained there, I cast my net fairly wide into the ocean of story for the first volume and dragged in "anything that remotely resembled a novel," but promised to tighten the net in the next volume. However, I decided it was too soon to focus only on unconventional, experimental novels, as I had planned. As Frank Zappa used to say, "Without deviation (from the norm), 'progress' is not possible," but "In order for one to *deviate successfully*, one has to have at least a passing acquaintance with whatever *norm* one expects to deviate from" (185). The novel settled into a norm during this early-modern period, and as a result, this volume examines more "normal" novels than the previous one did, all the better to contrast and appreciate the deviations from the norm.

Though this period did not witness the birth of the novel, as once believed, it did see an explosive growth spurt, both in the number of novels produced and the number of people who read them. Writers became more adventurous as they adapted this old genre to new uses, trying out new forms and genres, R&D'ing new techniques, pushing the envelope of realism, and shifting the focus from public actions to private thoughts, from sociology to psychology. Thousands of novels were published during this period all around the world, yet I suspect most readers' familiarity with pre-1800 European fiction is limited to *Don Quixote, Candide, The Sorrows of Young Werther*, maybe *The Princess of Clèves*, *Dangerous Liaisons*, and/or *Jacques the Fatalist*, and the names, if not the works, of Rousseau and Sade. Even one's familiarity with pre-1800 English novels might be limited to a half-dozen classics (*Pilgrim's Progress, Robinson Crusoe, Gulliver's Travels, Pamela, Tom Jones, Tristram Shandy*). And forget about Oriental

fiction. Separating the wheat from the chaff leaves hundreds of little-known novels that not only provide a context for those dozen or so classics, but are interesting in their own right and for their contributions to the art of the novel. So my history remains fairly comprehensive up until 1800, aside from a few countries (like Italy, Holland, and Russia) that produced too few *original* novels during this period to warrant inclusion.

By 1600 the novel was a familiar enough genre that I did not feel the need this time to haul in quasi novelistic narratives as I did in the previous volume. (Sorry, *Epic of Mwindo*; another time, *Nart Sagas from the Caucasus*.) The novel is a protean genre that evades any critic's confining definition, but this time I more often color inside the lines when it comes to classification. Novelist John Barth once suggested that Robert Burton's *Anatomy of Melancholy* (1621) could be considered a novel, and some Beckett critics have said the same about René Descartes's *Discourse on the Method* (1637), but by the 17th century the novel was a sufficiently recognized genre that these authors could have tweaked their books to fit that category, had they so desired. So while not necessarily disagreeing with these ingenious reclassifications, I won't be including such works. My elastic definition of the novel – the same as *Webster's*: a book-length work of fiction – stretches wide enough to include some works not usually classified as novels, but not as many as last time.

Regarding nomenclature: I'll be using terms of nationality in their broadest senses. In chapter 4 on the English novel, for example, "English" includes all inhabitants of the British Isles who wrote in English, whether they hailed from England, Ireland, Wales, Scotland, or the Isle of Man. Similarly, when I write of German novelists, I mean those who wrote in German, regardless of whether they lived in Bavaria, Prussia, Saxony, Austria, or Schaumberg-Lippe. Novelists are sorted by the language they wrote in, so the Swiss Rousseau and the Italian Casanova are both included in the chapter on the French novel, and those who, for reasons of their own, wrote in Latin get their own partition at the terminus of cap. I (as they might put it). Though 1600–1800 is the announced date range, in the case of the Germans it was necessary to start a little earlier, and elsewhere I follow a few 18th-century novelists into the first decades of the 19th for reasons explained in the text. Throughout the book I have lightly modernized quotations from early-modern texts, but only what textual scholars call

accidentals (spelling, punctuation, capitalization, italics, etc.), not substantives (the words themselves) – meaning I modernize "chirurgion" to "surgeon," but I don't change it to "doctor" or "physician." Most of the modernizing involves the deletion of superfluous commas, which make older authors sound like they suffered from a speech impediment, or were easily winded. ("Emily gave a last look to that splendid city, but her mind was then occupied by considering the probable events, that awaited her, in the scenes, to which she was removing, and with conjectures, concerning the motive of this sudden journey" – from Radcliffe's *Mysteries of Udolpho*.) Back then, typesetters, not authors, decided how texts should be set, and most authors wanted their texts to follow standard practices of the day – many were wayward spellers anyway – and undoubtedly they would want them updated to follow the standard practices of our day, rather than look like fusty antiques. When contemporary publishers bring out a new translation of an early-modern novel like *Candide*, they don't spell and punctuate it per 18th-century practices, and I see no reason why English novels of that period should retain the cobwebs of outdated conventions, except in special cases where an author (like Sterne) deliberately flouts the conventions. As often as possible, I cite novels not by page number but by chapter number (or volume/chapter, or by letter number in epistolary novels) to facilitate reference to other editions and, in the case of translations, to the originals.

Acknowledgments: Haaris Naqvi continues to be the best editor I've ever had; my sincerest thanks to him and the team at Bloomsbury. The multilingual John Soutter translated some foreign passages for me. Dr. Margery Palmer McCulloch (*Scottish Literary Review*) kindly sent me two otherwise unobtainable essays. For various suggestive remarks, I want to thank Karen Elizabeth Gordon, Thomas McGonigle, Julián Ríos, and Helmut Schwarzer. Special thanks go to John Galbraith Simmons for sharing his and his wife's unpublished translation of Sade's *Aline and Valcour*.

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CHAPTER 1

The European Novel

SPANISH FICTION

By the year 1600, the novel was an old, old genre. A well-read writer like Miguel de Cervantes (1547–1616), for example, was familiar with at least a few of the ancient Greek novels–he would model his last novel, *Persiles and Sigismunda*, on the greatest of them, Heliodorus's *Ethiopian Story*–and knew of the lowbrow Milesian tales and racy Roman novels like Petronius's *Satyricon* and Apuleius' *Golden Ass.* He read Italian and was familiar with Boccaccio's frame-tale novel *Decameron* and many of the novellas cranked out by later Italian writers. He had read novels produced by other nationalities on the Iberian Peninsula such as the Moors and Catalans, and he spent enough time among Muslims to hear some of their adventure novels and frame-tale narratives. (He made a Muslim the "author" of his most famous novel.) He had read a huge number of novels churned out by his countrymen: pastorals, picaresques, and of course the wildly popular novels of chivalry, based on earlier Arthurian models. He admired a few of these, such as the Catalan *Tirant lo Blanc*, and was jealous of the financial success of Mateo Alemán's *Guzman of Alfarache*, a long picaresque novel that appeared in 1599.

Cervantes' own writing career hadn't amounted to much. His first novel, *Galatea* (1585), was an attempt to cash in on the fad for pastoral novels; his is one of the most complex examples of the genre, a nonlinear narrative containing many embedded stories, reams of poetry, and forays into other genres such as the adventure tale and court intrigue, along with more violence than in most pastorals. *Galatea* was popular in its day, but a promised sequel never appeared, the fad faded, and nowadays it is read only by specialists. The very heterogeneity of its material suggests Cervantes found the pastoral genre too confining, or at least unsuited to his real talents. He had better luck with novellas, which he began writing in the

1590s, though they wouldn't be published until the following century. But these lean works would have to compete in the marketplace with fat novels of chivalry, which were still popular at the end of the 16th century thanks to endless sequels recycling a few brand-name knights like Amadis and Palmerin. In 1601, the beginning of a new century, Cervantes felt it was high time to revive his failing career and to redirect faltering Spanish fiction, and perhaps even redefine Spanish culture in general. Plus he needed the money.

Don Quixote is such a richly suggestive text that it has understandably inspired countless, often contradictory interpretations, ranging from esoteric readings "demonstrating," for example, that it is a cabalistic Jewish text or an allegory of Spanish politics, to sappy notions that Don Quixote is just a lovable idealist who believes in himself and follows his heart. But esoteric readings are usually private obsessions imposed on a text, not logically deduced from it, and to regard the knight as an unflappable optimist is a road that leads straight to a claims-adjuster braying "The Impossible Dream" in an amateur dinner-theater production of *Man of La Mancha*. No character in literature has been more misunderstood than Don Quixote, usually because readers latch on to one aspect of his character and ignore Cervantes' multiple ironies, stripping the benighted knight of his 16th-century context and dressing him in their own ideals and aspirations. Thus he was merely a comic character until the English turned him into a philanthropist, Romantics turned him into a tragic hero, orthodox Christians proclaimed him an unorthdox Christ figure (and Sancho too!), and the dinner-theater crowd applauded him as a lovable eccentric with a good heart. In a novel that is primarily about the dangers of self-delusion, it's best to begin with the basics to avoid deluding ourselves about the nature of this wily text.

First, *Don Quixote* is not one long novel but two separate works.[1] *El ingenioso hidalgo don Quijote de la Mancha* was published in January 1605, and though it enjoyed considerable success, Cervantes turned to other writing projects for the next decade. He pursued the novella form and in 1613 published a dozen of them under the title *Exemplary Stories* (*Novelas ejemplares*); in 1614 he published a long narrative poem called *The Voyage to Parnassus* (*El Viaje del Parnaso*), and the following year brought out a

big volume of his plays and theatrical interludes. Only after a spurious sequel to *DQ1* appeared in 1614 did Cervantes complete his own, which was published late in 1615, about six months before he died.

Whatever else it may be, *DQ1* is unquestionably about the art of fiction, both writing it and (mis)reading it. It contains more discussions of books, literary theory, and advice on writing than any novel I know. It is not so much an attack on novels of chivalry as an attack on bad writing, which is apparent from two key chapters that neatly bookend the novel: the sixth chapter, and the sixth chapter from the end (1.47). Chapter 6 contains the famous "inquisition" of the novels that drove a country squire named Alonso Quijana loco—crazy enough to rename himself Don Quixote of La Mancha and to spend two days in July 1589 terrorizing the neighborhood.[2] He knocks one innocent muleteer unconscious, splits the skull of a second, causes a boy to be beaten almost to death, then attempts to murder a merchant before earning a well-deserved beat-down himself. After a neighbor drags the raving madman home, Quijana's niece and housekeeper blame his beloved novels of chivalry for driving him insane and convince the town barber and priest to burn them all. But they consign to the flames only the bad ones, the ones written in "perverse and complicated language," the ones that are foolishly unrealistic and/or "silly and arrogant." The ignorant women want to burn them all, but the discriminating men set aside those that are unique (rather than derivative), those whose adventures "are excellent and very artful," written in language that "is courtly and clear," and particularly those that are realistic. It's worth repeating Cervantes had nothing against novels of chivalry, only *bad* ones, and bad literature in general, as chapter 6 indicates when the barber and priest move on to examine Quijana's collection of pastoral novels and poetry anthologies. (His books of epic poetry wind up in the bonfire by accident.)

This distinction is amplified near the end in chapter 47, when a cathedral canon from Toledo—whom Nabokov pegs as "Cervantes himself in disguise"[3]—joins the group transporting the lunatic home in a cage after a further month's mayhem. After the canon learns the source of Quijana's insanity, he agrees that most novels of chivalry are foolish, unoriginal, unrealistic, and make no claim to art:

> I have seen no book of chivalry that creates a complete tale, a body with all its members intact, so that the middle corresponds to the beginning, and the end to the beginning and the middle; instead, they are composed with so many members that the intention seems to be to shape a chimera or monster rather than to create a well-proportioned figure. Furthermore, the style is fatiguing, the action incredible, the love lascivious, the courtesies clumsy, the battles long, the language foolish, the journeys nonsensical, and, finally, since they are totally lacking in intelligent artifice, they deserve to be banished, like unproductive people, from Christian nations.

His objections are more aesthetic than ethical, and he goes on to say that, in the hands of a great writer more concerned with "intelligent artifice" than shock and awe, even novels of chivalry can be high art: first, because their traditional subject matter is an "opportunity for display" for "a good mind, providing a broad and spacious field where one's pen could write unhindered" and unfurl everything a writer knows:

> The writer can show his conversance with astrology, his excellence as a cosmographer, his knowledge of music, his intelligence in matters of state, and perhaps he will have the opportunity to demonstrate his talents as a necromancer, if he should wish to. He can display the guile of Ulysses, the piety of Aeneas, the valor of Achilles, the misfortunes of Hector, the treachery of Sinon, the friendship of Euryalus, the liberality of Alexander, the valor of Caesar, the clemency and truthfulness of Trajan, the fidelity of Zopyrus, the prudence of Cato, in short, all of those characteristics that make a noble man perfect, sometimes placing them all in one individual, sometimes dividing them among several.
>
> And if this is done in a pleasing style and with ingenious invention, and is drawn as close as possible to the truth, it no doubt will weave a cloth composed of many different and beautiful threads, and when it is finished, it will display such perfection and beauty that it will achieve the greatest goal of writing, which, as I have said, is to teach and delight at the same time. Because the free writing style of these books allows the author to show his skills as an epic, lyric, tragic, and comic writer, with

> all the characteristics contained in the sweet and pleasing sciences and rhetoric; for the epic can be written in prose as well as verse.

This rousing defense of the novel—elevating it to the status of the classical epic, and the *novelist* (not the protagonist) to the stature of an epic hero—is worth quoting at length to reinforce the point *DQ1* is not "an invective against books of chivalry," as Cervantes' friend says in the prologue and which has been repeated ever since; it's an invective against books that lack "a pleasing style and . . . ingenious invention"; the canon goes on to apply the same standards to the plays of his day, condemning them for their artlessness, not because they belong to one genre or another. By this point in the novel, of course, the canon is preaching to the choir, for any reader who has reached chapter 47 has ample evidence that even an old dog like the chivalric novel can be taught new tricks by a trainer as talented as Cervantes.

Along with the two bookend discussions of chivalric fiction (and a plug for them as popular entertainment in 1.32), *DQ1* includes a cynical guide to slapping together a conventional novel (offered by Cervantes' glib friend in the prologue), discussions of the art of literary translation, the importance of mimesis in writing, the relatively new picaresque novel (1.22), the damning compromises commercial writers make (1.53), and numerous instances of the paradox that fiction is a lie that tells the truth. In addition, there are many metafictional moments when Cervantes refers to himself (or his other writings) in the third person and comments on the fictionality of his fiction, which is one reason why he is the don of postmodernists like Jorge Luis Borges, John Barth, Robert Coover, and Julián Ríos. All of this makes *DQ1* a veritable primer on creative writing.

Teaching by example, Cervantes includes several models of what he considers fine writing within *DQ1*, which creates one of the many cognitive dissonances in this brilliant but problematic novel. Five times Cervantes interrupts the "ingenious invention" of Don Quixote's misadventures to insert a tale that has little more than "a pleasing style" to recommend it. There is the modern pastoral of Marcela and her suitors (1.12–14), Cardenio's tale (scattered throughout chapters 23–36), the freestanding *Novel of the Man Who Was Recklessly Curious* (32–34), the autobiographical captive's tale (39–41), and the cautionary tale of Leandra

(51).[4] A few of them are followed by self-congratulatory remarks—one auditor tells the former captive "the manner in which you have recounted this remarkable tale has been equal to the unusual and marvelous events themselves" (1.42)—but these interpolated tales are the most traditional and tedious sections of the novel. They are the first to go in any abridged edition of *Don Quixote*, and I'm guessing even those who love the novel enough to read it frequently—Faulkner claimed to read it once a year, Barth once a decade—probably skip these sections. They are well-made tales by the standards Cervantes' surrogates lay out above, but the plots and sentiments are familiar from dozens of Renaissance novellas, and the heroines especially (with the exception of Marcela) are walking clichés, each praised as a peerless PGOAT until the next one comes along.[5] This reaches a ludicrous point in chapter 42 when there is a four-PGOAT pileup at the same inn, somewhat to the narrator's embarrassment. (Lately arrived Clara de Viedma "was so elegant, beautiful, and charming that everyone marveled at the sight of her, *and if they had not already seen Dorotea and Luscinda and Zoraida at the inn,* they would have thought that beauty comparable to hers would be difficult to find" [my italics].)

Don Quixote is irritated by Pedro's clumsy narration of Marcela's tale (1.12) and Sancho's even clumsier attempt at storytelling (1.20)—clear models of how *not* to tell a story—but in a novel that seeks to rescue the distressed maiden of Spanish fiction from the evil giants of bad writing, it is puzzling why Cervantes would offer up such conventional tales as models of good literature. Although the interpolated tales do have some thematic relationship to the rest of the novel, especially the *Man Who Was Recklessly Curious*,[6] there is the suspicion these are unpublished novellas Cervantes had written earlier and decided to salvage by sticking them in here (as is the case with many of the poems in the novel). Or it could be, as Borges suggests, "The *Quixote* is less an antidote for those fictions than it is a secret, nostalgic farewell."[7] The same kind of aesthetic schizophrenia can be found in his *Exemplary Stories*, which are intended to be exemplary models of writing as well as moral tales: several of them are indeed innovative and even aesthetically subversive, but most modern editors drop at least four of the novellas for the reasons Lesley Lipson politely gives:

"Since they reflect the more traditional format of love and adventure, they are stylistically less adventurous than the rest. This also makes them less representative of Cervantes as an innovator."[8] Making matters worse, *DQ1* is filled with minor errors and inconsistencies regarding names, chronology, events like the loss of Sancho's donkey, and misplaced chapter headings—all of which Cervantes apparently pleads guilty to in *DQ2* (2.3), blaming some errors on typesetters. Even the last line of the novel is a botched quotation. Such sloppy craftsmanship further compromises the novel's alleged pedagogic value, and makes us question what he is really trying to teach us about writing.

While a full quarter of *DQ1*ostensibly preaches an orthodox approach to fiction and provides several models of such, the rest of it consists of highly unorthodox fiction and scenes of such stupendous, iconic power—Don Quixote tilting at windmills!—that they seem to belong to the timeless realm of myth. This formal contradiction, along with the tonal dissonance between the tragic interpolated stories and the comic main story, warns us the novel may be at cross-purposes with itself, even suggesting orthodox forms and beliefs are inferior to heterodox ones.

Second, we have to accept that Don Quixote is literally insane; he is not an idealist, an individualist marching to the beat of his own drum, a Walter Mittyesque daydreamer, a nostalgic conservative longing for the good old days, but *loco*, a victim of *locura* (madness). These are the Spanish words Cervantes repeats insistently, and while Alonso Quijana's condition might be more accurately diagnosed as monomania, any interpretation of his speeches, acts, or beliefs must start from the realization he is a madman, and a dangerous one at that. He suffers from hallucinations and violent explosions of rage, which cause him to attack innocent people without warning, several times nearly killing them (including two attempts on Sancho's life). Like the clinically insane, he can't distinguish between fantasy and reality, the result of overdosing on novels of chivalry and convincing himself they are accurate historical chronicles, rather than escapist fiction. We should remember that in Cervantes' day madmen were often objects of cruel fun, and in those scenes where other characters play along with (and even encourage) Don Quixote's madness, we should picture

some heartless kids today taunting a retarded boy. I laugh as loudly as anyone at some of Don Quixote's antics, but I'm not proud of it.

The key indicator of his madness, of course, is his assumption that books of fiction are literally true. (In Spanish, *historia* can mean both "history" and "story," a fuzziness Cervantes exploits.) But not only are the chivalry novels he reads wildly unrealistic, they contradict the historical record: knights in the Middle Ages were merely elite soldiers, and "chivalry" was just a poetic ideal—"indeed, an ideal that may have been only infrequently attained, and perhaps never in actual warfare," as one authority informs us.[9] Put bluntly, Don Quixote's late-life career change is based on a compound lie: the heroes who inspire him never existed, their values are poetic inventions, and the texts that enshrine these heroes and ideals are falsehoods. Though deluded in almost everything he sees, he self-righteously insists that he alone sees clearly and that everyone else walks in darkness. *DQ1* is not about the power of the imagination to transform mundane reality, as some suggest, but about deluding yourself, getting your facts wrong, and then endangering others with your delusions. (Think of Don Quixote as a Christian Scientist parent who allows his sick child to die rather than seek medical assistance, confident in the power of prayer and the will of his god. Or think of him as a born-again Christian president willing to drag his country into a ruinous, unnecessary war in pursuit of a delusional political agenda.) As Guy Davenport notes, the adjective *quixotic* —a hopelessly idealistic notion or project—"should mean something like *hallucinated, self-hypnotized*, or *play in collision with reality*."[10] How then can any reader admire the actions of a lunatic so deeply lost in error and delusion, so alienated from the reality-based world? Perhaps because all readers live in cultures that tolerate, even admire such deludenoids.

Most people aren't literally driven crazy by books and then inspired to act them out in the real world, with one obvious exception: religious nuts. Like Don Quixote, they immerse themselves in fanciful texts that they regard as factually true (the Bible, the Quran, the Book of Mormon, The Urantia Book, whatever), then sally forth into the world and try to impose the dictates of those fictions on others, resorting to violence when necessary in the belief they are doing their god's work.[11] Don Quixote is of course a devout Catholic and regards knight-errantry as a spiritual calling: "we are

ministers of God on earth, the arms by which His justice is put into effect on earth" (1.13). But instead of being labeled crazy, such people are esteemed as moral guardians, pillars of the community, spiritual leaders, and in extreme cases martyrs in a righteous cause, even though the books they base their beliefs on are as unhistorical and contrived as *The Exploits of Esplandián, Felixmarte of Hyrcania, The Knight Platir*, and other foolish fictions in Don Quixote's library.

As usual, we can count on Sancho Panza to point out the obvious: "What demons in your heart incite you to attack our Catholic faith?" he asks his master in *DQ1*'s final chapter, by which point a pattern should be clear. In dozens of instances Cervantes slyly associates chivalric novels with the Bible, beginning in the prologue when his friend advices him "if you name some giant in your book, make him the giant Goliath, and just by doing that, which is almost no trouble at all, you have a nice long annotation, because you can then write: *The giant Goliath, or Goliat, was a Philistine whom the shepherd David slew with a stone in the valley of Terebint, as recounted in the Book of Kings.*" In the book-burning chapter (1.6), the priest uses religious imagery to judge Don Quixote's chivalry novels, as though he were the 2nd-century Irenaeus of Lyon separating orthodox gospels from heretical apocrypha. The canon likewise compares the authors of such novels to "the founders of new sects and new ways of life, . . . giving the ignorant rabble a reason to believe and consider as true all the absurdities they contain" (1.49); he goes on tell Don Quixote that if he still wishes "to read books about great chivalric deeds, read Judges in Holy Scripture, and there you will find magnificent truths and deeds both remarkable and *real*" (my italics).[12] How sneaky of Cervantes to express these views wearing the camouflage of the priest and canon; verily, "as the saying goes, 'The devil can hide behind the cross' " (1.6, repeated in 2.47). Throughout the novel, Don Quixote defends the discrepancies and contradictions in novels of chivalry with all the ingenuousness of a fundamentalist defending the inerrancy of the Bible. While it would be too reductive (but not wrong) to say Cervantes equates knight-errantry with religious belief, he does seem to insinuate a syllogism that goes: Chivalric novels are false; the Bible resembles those novels; therefore, the Bible is false. But Cervantes gleefully complicates matters by insisting repeatedly

that *Don Quixote* is true, which he and everyone who reads it knows is untrue.

In the land of the Spanish Inquisition, Cervantes couldn't come straight out and call the Bible untrue, and probably wouldn't have gone that far even if he could. Like many people then and now, he probably felt its "spiritual truths" were independent of the Bible's historical veracity; that is, the Bible is "true" if treated like a novel, offering ethical lessons and insights in fiction form. And in fact that's what Cervantes means when he claims his novel, unlike unrealistic novels of chivalry, is "true": it's true to life and to human nature, though not literally true. But if you insist on the Bible's veracity, you are as mad as Don Quixote, and potentially as dangerous. It's difficult not to develop affection for the old coot, but we must not ignore his rap sheet: numerous vicious assaults on innocent citizens, several attempted murders, animal cruelty (he kills more than seven sheep, not to mention the hardships he imposes upon long-suffering Rocinante), aiding and abetting the escape of a chain-gang of criminals, extensive property damage, and much emotional distress for his niece and housekeeper. He considers himself above the law, hallucinates like a tripping hippie, and is the worst kind of meddling, holier-than-thou do-gooder. Don Quixote's counterparts today range from self-appointed moral watchdogs who boycott theaters, television companies, and museums showing unorthodox art, to concerned but narrow-minded parents who try to remove *Huckleberry Finn* and the Harry Potter novels from school library shelves, to those who take such faith-based initiatives as assassinating abortion providers and committing acts of terrorism. Anyone who reads *DQ1* carefully must regard Don Quixote as a madman, not a madcap, much less a model. I keep harping upon this point because Cervantes does; even in the concluding chapter of *DQ1,* Don Quixote tries to stab a goatherd, attacks a procession of penitents carrying a statue of the Catholic goddess Mary (under the assumption it is a gang of villains abducting a noble lady), and is once more designated by Cervantes an *hombre loco*. The author wants us to admire *Don Quixote*, not Don Quixote.

The Knight of the Sorrowful Face is such an extraordinary character that he seems capable of symbolizing a variety of things, but I would insist, contra much current critical theory, that only those grounded in the text are

valid.[13] For example, one can say he represents the man of faith in the process of being rendered ridiculous in the late 16th-century by the man of science, who relies on testing and empirical evidence to understand the world, not on venerable texts of dubious origin. This conflict is dramatized in a minor incident at the beginning of the novel: realizing he will need a sallet helmet for his adventures, Quijana makes a pasteboard visor to add to an old headpiece to make a complete helmet. He tests it with his sword and easily smashes it to pieces. So "he made another one, placing strips of iron on the inside so that he was satisfied with its strength; and not wanting to put it to the test again, he designated and accepted it as an extremely fine sallet" (1.1). "Not wanting to make any further experiments" (as Raffel translates the key clause), he retreats from the new world of science to the old world of faith, choosing to believe (rather than *know*) because it allows him to retain control over his world. This is the moment Alonso Quijana becomes Don Quixote of La Mancha. Once he puts the homemade helmet on, he is trapped in it and can't get it off, "and so he spent all night wearing the helmet and was the most comical and curious figure anyone could imagine" (1.3), a brilliant metaphor for a solipsist trapped in his own private fantasy world, or for a true believer within the armor of faith. Needless to say, the visor shatters the first time it is put to the test.

How many of *DQ1*'s earliest readers noticed these subversive subtleties is difficult to say; most seem to have regarded the novel merely as an entertaining farce—which it certainly is—along the lines of *Monty Python and the Holy Grail*. In the sequel, Cervantes decided to give the crowd more of what they wanted, but he also pumped up the paradoxes, heterodoxies, and metafictional wizardry—something to make the cognoscenti think.

Segunda parte del ingenioso caballero don Quijote de la Mancha appeared at the end of 1615, and begins a month after the concluding events of the first part. During that impossibly brief time, we are to believe *DQ1* was typeset, printed, and distributed throughout Spain. Even Don Quixote, who will believe anything, "could not persuade himself that such a history existed, for the blood of the enemies he had slain was not yet dry on the blade of his sword and his chivalric exploits were already in print" (2.3). Not only that, *DQ2* is set in the summer of 1614, meaning the events of

DQ1 took place nine years *after* it was published, and which makes a mockery of the narrator's earlier contention the story came from an old Arabic manuscript (1.9). This is further evidence either of Cervantes' carelessness or his carefree attitude toward the conventions of novel-writing.

DQ2 finds Cervantes still in his self-appointed role as grand inquisitor of bad Spanish art (it's disingenuous to insist on a strict distinction between Cervantes and his narrator): ridiculous novels of chivalry still come under fire, but he also discusses plays (2.12), poetry (2.16, 70), commercial writing (2.22), translations (2.62), and painting (2.71), as well as the ancillary fields of criticism and publishing. The art of the novel remains Cervantes' principal concern, and the two novels that receive the most commentary are *DQ1*—Cervantes takes this opportunity to explain discrepancies and defend his artistic choices—and the unauthorized sequel the pseudonymous Alonso de Avellaneda published in 1614. Cervantes was outraged when the latter's *Segunda parte del ingenioso hidalgo don Quijote de la Mancha* appeared, but he recognized it as a godsend that would allow him to complicate his metafiction further. Don Quixote begins running in to people who have read the false *Quixote*, which causes him to rail against it as yet another example of bad fiction and to act as though someone were out there imitating him as badly (unbeknownst to him) as he imitates the heroes of chivalric fiction. It's worth noting that he never comes across a copy of *DQ1*, but he does read some of the false *Quixote* in Barcelona near the end of the novel (2.72)—"the first scene in literature in which a literary character visits a bookstore," Mancing remarks (586).[14] By this point, *Don Quixote* has become a Möbius strip of fiction imitating fiction imitating life imitating fiction imitating. . . .

Although one can find metafictional gestures in earlier novels, instances of a writer self-consciously commenting on his work within the work, Cervantes' decision to have his characters comment on a novel in which they appear is a stunning innovation. Of course, he had deployed some metafictional devices in *DQ1*: the novel begins with poems from characters in chivalric literature addressed to characters in Cervantes' novel (a section left out of most English translations), followed by a metafictional prologue about the writing of prologues. The novel proper features a sardonic first-

person narrator who claims to be telling a story adapted from earlier "authors of this absolutely true history" (1.1), until he runs out of text mid-incident at the end of chapter 8. In chapter 9 the narrator searches for more of the novel until he discovers an Arabic version of Don Quixote's story by a Muslim historian named Cide Hamete Benengeli, which he acquires for a song and then pays to have translated into Castilian. This is much more elaborate and playful than the older convention of discovering and publishing an old manuscript, and as a result we have Cervantes pretending to be an editor commenting (after chapter 9) on a translation—in which the translator occasionally departs from the original—from an Arabic recension of a Spanish story available in several versions, introduced by literary characters who "existed" long ago, all concerning a fictional character who is convinced other fictional characters are real. And if that were not enough to make the head spin, Cervantes ups the ante in *DQ2* when he brings the published *DQ1* into the game. This audacious ploy generates a mindbending expansion of the main theme of the first part, namely, the uses and misuses of fiction. Silly novels of chivalry inspired Don Quixote to act them out in the real world, and in part 2, *DQ1* inspires several characters to act *it* out; for Don Quixote, part 1 is a tragedy, but for them, it's a farce.

Sansón Carrasco, a mischievous grad student, is the first to tell the knight and his squire about the novel they're in, and then dresses up as the Knight of the Mirrors to cut short Don Quixote's third sally in search of adventures; unexpectedly defeated, Sansón recuperates and returns at the end as the Knight of the White Moon and defeats him, forcing Don Quixote to abandon knighthood for a year. Between the time of those two jousts, a number of readers of *DQ1* and of the false *Quixote* encounter the knight and play along with his madness–"People know Don Quixote like a book," quips critic Walter L. Reed (84)–none more so than the fun-loving duke and duchess whose elaborately staged deceptions occupy much of *DQ2*. Even Sancho deceives him about his lady-love Dulcinea (and is deceived in turn when made governor of an island). If part 1 is about the dangers of deceiving oneself, part 2 is about the dangers of being deceived by others, especially by those in positions of authority. "Cide Hamete goes on to say that in his opinion the deceivers are as mad as the deceived, and that the duke and duchess came very close to seeming like fools since they went to such lengths to deceive two fools," says the narrator (or the translator) near

the end of the novel (2.70), long after he exposed the duke and duchess as corrupt people not averse to using weapons of mass deception to further their own agendas.

Don Quixote is easily deceived because his condition is unchanged from *DQ1*; he is still *loco*, still armed, and dangerous. He almost kills both the "Knight of the Mirrors" and a puppeteer; tries to kill several cats; threatens to kill a man on hearsay evidence; attempts to whip Sancho; and again causes miscellaneous property damage. Chapter 9 opens with the warning "the madness of Don Quixote here reached the limit and boundaries of the greatest madnesses that can be imagined, and even passed two crossbow shots beyond them." Making matters worse is his willingness to be deceived; first, he allows Sancho to convince him that an ugly, smelly, peasant girl is his beloved Dulcinea, maliciously transformed by enchanters (2.10). He is heartbroken he can't see the beautiful princess Sancho describes, and wants so desperately to believe in her perfection that he ignores the evidence before his eyes (and the garlic smell in his nose). His yearning for her, which displaces his abstract desire for fame in *DQ1*, is so strong that he blames himself for her transformation and devotes himself to her disenchantment for the rest of the novel. Then it gets sadder: after his strange, beautiful dream in the Cave of Montesinos, and after Sancho lies about what he saw while pretending to ride the magic horse Clavileño through the skies, Don Quixote whispers to his squire: "Sancho, just as you want people to believe what you have seen in the sky, I want you to believe what I saw in the Cave of Montesinos. And that is all I have to say" (2.41). That is one of the most extraordinary moments in the entire novel, and I don't know whether to laugh or to cry. When I hear religious people today call for ecumenical tolerance and respect for the religions of others, I hear the pathetic pact made by these two fools: I'll believe in your fantasy if you'll believe in mine.

Enabled by all the pranksters around him, Don Quixote still believes in the veracity of chivalric literature, and Cervantes continues to expose the not-so-deceptive similarities between the imaginary realms of chivalry and Catholicism. Don Quixote defends his belief in giants by citing Goliath in "Holy Scripture, which cannot deviate an iota from the truth" (2.1), insists "chivalry is a religion, and there are sainted knights in Glory" (2.8), mistakes a church for "the palace of Dulcinea," his Virgin Mary (2.9), and

consistently uses religious terminology to explain his acts of chivalry. When he encounters "approximately a dozen men dressed as farmers"—note that the narrator doesn't call them farmers, but "men dressed as farmers," wary of appearances in a way Don Quixote is not—who are transporting wooden images intended for an altarpiece, he regards them as fellow knights:

> This was one of the best knights errant the divine militia ever had: his name was Don St. George, and he was also a protector of damsels. Let us see this one. . . . This knight ["it *seemed* to be St. Martin" (my italics)] was another Christian seeker of adventures, and I believe he was more generous than brave, . . . This one certainly is a knight, a member of the squadrons of Christ; his name is St. James the Moorkiller, one of the most valiant saints and knights the world has ever had, and that heaven has now. . . . This [St. Paul] was the greatest enemy of the Church of God Our Lord had at the time, and the greatest defender it will ever have; a knight errant in life, and a steadfast saint in death, . . . [T]he difference, however, between me and them [Don Quixote says of the wooden idols] is that they were saints and fought in the divine manner, and I am a sinner and fight in the human manner. They conquered heaven by force of arms, for "the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence" [Matt. 11:12], and so far I do not know what I am conquering by the force of my labors. . . . (2.58)

Although he doesn't know it, valiant Don Quixote is conquering irrationality, superstition, and uncritical belief in the inerrancy of texts, whether chivalric or biblical. Though the censors let this passage stand (they insisted on changes in other arguably blasphemous ones), it's hard to imagine a harsher condemnation of Catholicism. It highlights the religion's tendency to resort to violence to enforce its doctrines, and equates some of its most famous saints with the imaginary heroes of third-rate novels, suggesting only a madman would hold them in esteem and believe in their legends. (The farmers "did not understand half of what he said.") This isn't routine anticlericalism; as fabulist Robert Coover explains, Cervantes "uses familiar mythic or historical forms to combat the content of those forms and to conduct the reader (*lector amantísimo!*) to the real, away from

mystification to clarification, away from magic to maturity, away from mystery to revelation."[15]

As *DQ2* progresses, Don Quixote experiences fewer hallucinations and enjoys more moments of lucidity, conveniently so when Cervantes wants him to express one of his own opinions on a subject. He strikes one character as "a sane man gone mad and a madman edging toward sanity" (2.17), though he still has trouble distinguishing between fiction and reality, as in the hilarious scene where he gets so caught up in a puppet show that he attacks its villains (2.26). A medieval man, he still believes in the Ptolemaic view of the universe and prefers prayer to perception. When confronted with the resemblance between "Countess Trifaldi" and the steward who impersonated her, Don Quixote advices Sancho "it would imply a very serious contradiction, and this is not the time to make such inquiries, for that would lead us into intricate labyrinths. Believe me, my friend, it is necessary to pray to Our Lord very sincerely to save both of us from evil wizards and wicked enchanters" (2.44). Sancho, a modern man blessed with the spirit of scientific inquiry, responds, "All right: I'll be quiet, but I'll stay on the alert from now on to see if I can find anything else that will prove or disprove what I suspect."[16] Nor does the knight embrace deductive reasoning: coming across a boat, he announces with what can only be called religious conviction, "You must know, Sancho, that this boat clearly and beyond any doubt is calling and inviting me to get in it and sail to assist a knight . . ." whereas Sancho relies on empirical evidence and reasoning: "it seems to me it belongs to some fishermen, because the best shad in the world swim this river" (2.29)—which turns out to be true. But Don Quixote insists, and nearly gets them both drowned. The narrator makes it clear which side he's on—the religious or the scientific—by observing "the boat glided gently along in midstream, moved not by any secret intelligence or hidden enchanter, but by the current of the water itself. . . ."

Worn down by disappointment and melancholy, and perhaps educated by Sancho's rational approach to things (just as Sancho adopts some of his master's fanciful notions), the former Alonso Quixano (Quixana in *DQ1*) eventually regains his senses after returning home, announcing, "My judgment is restored, free and clear of the dark shadows of ignorance

imposed on it by my grievous and constant reading of detestable books of chivalry" (2.74), echoing a line he had uttered on a dark night of the soul a few weeks earlier: "*Post tenebras spero lucem*" (2.68): "after the darkness, I hope for the light," the motto (derived from Job 17:12) of Cervantes' publisher and printed on the original title pages of both volumes of *Don Quixote*. Quixano has left behind the darkness of madness, superstition, irrationality, subjectivity, and duplicitous writing (both secular and sacred) for the light of reason, objectivity, and sanity, and dies a good death. The transition is quietly noted in the final chapter when the narrator describes Quixano's moment of death: he "gave up the ghost. I mean to say, he died"—rejecting Catholic superstition ("*dio su espíritu*") for scientific fact ("*el muerto*").

It's a tribute to Cervantes' artistic cunning that this sensible ending feels like a crushing defeat, for the harshest critic of the mad and dangerous Don Quixote must admit Alonso Quixano had the time of his life during that final summer vacation, living the dream. When Don Quixote confronts a fellow 50-year-old in 2.16, he sees in Don Diego de Miranda what he might have become had he led a saner life: a conventional man, married with children, hospitable, and utterly boring. Instead, Quixano spent a lifetime filling his head with books—his erudition indicates he read wider than novels of chivalry—and the only romantic feelings we're told about resulted from a few glimpses over the last dozen years of a peasant girl named Aldonza Lorenza, "although she, apparently, never knew or noticed" (1.1). His devotion to his dreamgirl is moving, especially in *DQ2* where it matures from a joke to a heartbreaking case of unrequited love. (And how brilliant of Cervantes to abstain from letting her appear in his pages, allowing us to wonder what he saw in the crude wench Sancho describes.) Never married, Quixano is a "virgin" to the real world, which is significant: most novels are about a young person's transition from innocence to experience; it's inherently comical for a 50-year-old man to undergo this transition (cf. the 2005 film *The 40-Year-Old Virgin*), but it's also sad, which makes this loveless bookworm's end-of-life blowout all the more endearing.

For Cervantes, writing *Don Quixote* was a similar late-life adventure, an occasional vacation from what he considered serious work (which we'll get to next). That explains his flippant lack of concern for consistency and

narrative logic, for the novel's contradictions, discrepancies, and broken chronology, Sancho's uncharacteristic elocution at times, and other aesthetic faults. (Don Quixote explains them all away as the work of malevolent magicians.) It also explains the ludic nature of the text: it is filled with snatches of songs and other pop-cultural references of the day, childish wordplay such as: "Don Quixote settled down at the foot of an elm, and Sancho at the foot of a beech, for these trees, and others like them, always have feet but not hands" (2.28), bursts of purple prose, parodies, and chapter titles that grow increasingly silly. (2.66: "Which recounts what will be seen by whoever reads it, or heard by whoever listens to it being read"; 2.70: "Which follows chapter LXIX, and deals with matters necessary to the clarity of this history.") Due to negative feedback, Cervantes resisted inserting any previously written novellas into *DQ2* as he had in *DQ1*, but he indulged his sweet tooth for old-fashioned tales with brief interludes like the story of Basilio and Quiteria (2.19–22) and that of the crossdressing woman who kills her lover under the mistaken assumption he has dumped her for another (2.60), another quixotic exemplum about acting violently under the delusion one is in the right. And throughout Cervantes uses the novel's broad platform to express his opinions on a variety of topics, usually via his knight, whose feats of rhetoric grow more impressive than his feats of chivalry. Cervantes wasn't the first to regard the novel as a carnival, where you can get away with anything (bearded ladies! fearsome lions! a puppet show for the kiddies!) as long as you keep your readers entertained, but his example expanded the possibilities for the genre as it entered the modern age.

Exaggerated claims have been made for *Don Quixote* over the centuries. Some call it the first novel, which it certainly is not, or the greatest novel ever written, though its many errors and inconsistencies disqualify it from that honor. (Is it too much to ask that the greatest novel be as technically accomplished as the greatest painting, the greatest symphony, etc.?) It can be considered the first *modern* novel, however; not in a chronological sense —novels were pouring off the presses all around the world at the beginning of the 17th century, or wherever you want to place the beginning of the early modern era—but in the sense that it marks the transition from the medieval worldview (unscientific, faith-based, Ptolemaic, tradition-bound, authoritarian, certain, static) to the modern. Cervantes was one of the brave

few willing to enter the "intricate labyrinths" Don Quixote refused to enter, the modern age of uncertainty, relativism, and the deceptiveness of appearances (the novel's nominal theme). It was published at a time when the master narrative that had sustained Christian Europe for over a millennium was unraveling like Don Quixote's cheap stockings (2.44, the saddest chapter in the novel), and started to sound as contrived and unreliable as a novel of chivalry. Braving the wrath of the reactionary Church, a few strove to replace the old faith-based world with a fact-based one developed from scientific inquiry, and *Don Quixote* gleefully shows the indignities and mockery appropriate to those who didn't get with the new program. It's a less comforting world, a humbling one where one has to accept the fact the earth is not the center of the universe but one of many planets, "no larger than a mustard seed, and the men walking on it not much bigger than hazel nuts," as the Copernican Sancho Panza puts it (2.41, lying through his teeth, but no matter). Cervantes evinces a lingering nostalgia for that comfortable old world he grew up in, but he was wise and disillusioned enough to know it was time for it to be tossed into the flames, laughed out of existence, desacralized, demythologized, disenchanted, *desengaño*—the Spanish word means "disillusioned" but also "disabused" of wrongful notions, freed from misconceptions.

Not everyone agreed, of course—even today there are billions of people who still possess a medieval worldview—and for many *Don Quixote* was and remains merely a comic novel about an Abbott-and-Costello act working the country-inn circuit of old Andalusia. Other medieval-minded people have regarded Don Quixote as a Christ figure; he is one all right, but not in a positive way. He's a parody of Christ, a mockery of him; his delusions imply that Christ was a similar madman, crazed by Old Testament prophecies into regarding himself as the messiah just as Quixana was duped by novels of chivalry into regarding himself as a glorious knight-errant. Only by ignoring all the ironic deflations in Cervantes' text—as religious people ignore the inconvenient errors, prejudices, and barbarisms of their sacred texts—can one associate the loon of Spain with the Light of the World.[17]

More interesting than readers' responses are those of the novelists who followed Cervantes. First, they took from him a tone and attitude (which

Cervantes inherited from Petronius, Boccaccio, and Rabelais) more suitable for the skeptical modern age, which would later be praised by Nietzsche: "Objections, digressions, gay mistrust, the delight in mockery are signs of health: everything unconditional belongs in pathology."[18] We'll hear that tone again in Scarron, Swift, Fielding, Sterne, Wieland, Stendahl, Melville, Flaubert, Twain, Wilde, Joyce, and most modernists and postmodernists. Second, they learned that a comic novel can deal with serious philosophical issues, that farce is not necessarily incompatible with profundity. And third, they saw the role of the novelist change from near-anonymous chronicler to center-stage performer, and the novel become an "opportunity for display" for "a good mind, providing a broad and spacious field where one's pen could write unhindered," as Cervantes' canon says, "allow[ing] the author to show his skills. . . ." (1.47). Significantly, the closing scene of *DQ2* is given not to Don Quixote but to his putative author, Cide Hamete Berenjena (Benengeli in *DQ1*), who hangs up his pen on a rack as though it were a knight's lance. The author is the true hero of this double-decker novel, the "ingenious gentleman" of the title page. Not all novelists would don the barber's basin and sally forth into the expanded field of fiction Cervantes opened up, but the modern novel is unthinkable without this revolutionary masterpiece.

Cervantes pinned his hopes for literary immortality not on the immortal *Don Quixote* but on the novel he finished shortly before he died, which was published posthumously in January 1617 as *The Trials of Persiles and Sigismunda* (*Los Trabajos de Persiles y Sigismunda*). He evidently had been working on it since the 1590s, and a few months before finishing it he predicted "it will be either the worst or best [novel] ever composed in our language" (*DQ2* dedication, dated 31 October 1615). It is certainly not the worst, and if Cervantes had never written *Don Quixote*, it (and his earlier *Galatea*) might be held in higher esteem; but anyone today who reads *Persiles and Sigismunda* on the heels of *Don Quixote* can scarcely believe it was written by the same author.

In the prologue to his *Exemplary Stories*, Cervantes claimed his work in progress is "a book which dares to compete with Heliodorus" (5). This 3rd/4th-century author produced the finest of the ancient Greek novels, *An Ethiopian Story*, which opens in medias res in imitation of the *Odyssey* and

follows the adventures of a romantic couple named Theagenes and Charikleia. (Two 16th-century Spanish translations were available to Cervantes.) *Persiles and Sigismunda* likewise begins in the middle of things and reveals the backstory only in fragments later on, and the chronological beginning of the tale not until nine pages from the end of the 340-page novel. It concerns an incredibly handsome prince of Thule (Iceland) named Persiles, who falls for the incredibly beautiful princess of "Frisland" named Sigismunda, whom Persiles' boorish older brother wants to marry. (The reader is reminded of the superlative physical beauty of these teenagers throughout the novel.) To escape that calamity, the pair leaves icy Thule for sunny Rome, pretending to be brother and sister and telling others that Sigismunda wants to go to Rome to improve her understanding of Catholicism, because the version "in those northern regions is somewhat in need of repair."[19] As in *An Ethiopian Story* and other Greek novels, the couple endures shipwrecks, separations, capture by pirates, crossdressing disguises, assaults on their virginity, and several near-death experiences before they are finally married in Rome and then return north to live happily ever after.

During their travels, the couple collects a small band of followers, each of whom has a colorful story, and during their journey they encounter dozens of others with stories to tell, which makes the novel read like an anthology much of the time, specifically an anthology of stories about the crazy things love makes a person do. Love and jealousy are the ostensible, intertwined themes of the novel, and the author shows great tolerance for the things done in the name of love, "for the powerful forces of love often confuse the most intelligent minds" (3.5).

This worldly theme is pitched to the common reader; for the cognoscenti, Cervantes overlays a Christian allegory about the soul's progress from the dark, northern wastes of paganism to the pure light of Catholicism emanating from Rome, which represents Augustine's *civitate Dei*. Sigismunda especially becomes more concerned with the state of her soul than her fiancé, and once in Rome decides to become a nun, which nearly destroys Persiles until some highly contrived plot upheavals cause her to relent. The novel is carefully structured by way of biblical parallels and typology, as critics have shown, and Cervantes apparently felt it was the

redemptive marriage of the pagan Greek novel with Christian allegory that made *Persiles and Sigismunda* his crowning achievement. Late in the novel, Persiles learns of

> the most unusual museum in the world, unusual because there were no figures in it of people who in fact had lived or did exist, but rather some blank spaces prepared so the distinguished people of the future could be painted on them, especially those who'd be famous poets in centuries to come. Among these empty places he'd especially noticed two; at the top of one of them was written Torcuato Tasso, and a little further down it said, *Jerusalem Delivered*, while on the other was written Zárate, and below that, *The Cross and Constantine.* (4.6)

Cervantes hoped to occupy one of those blank spaces, and considered his novel on par with those two Catholic verse epics, for as the canon of Toledo says, "the epic can be written in prose as well as verse" (*DQ* 1.47).

For some of us, there are few terms that induce narcosis quicker than "Christian allegory." It's more interesting to regard *Persiles and Sigismunda* not as an allegory of the growth of the soul but as one of the growth of a genre, for it seems to recapitulate the history of fiction. The first of the novel's four books recalls ancient myths and legends: it begins with a barbarian shouting, followed by tales of werewolves, witches, a flying carpet, sea monsters, pagan rituals, and references to the Jewish legends of Noah's ark and Jonah and the whale. The narrative style is straightforward, and while Cervantes' northern settings don't correspond very closely to actual geography, they evoke the mythic world of legendary regions and older forms of storytelling. At the beginning of book 2, however, we learn that we've been reading a translation, not an original account, and thereafter the novel becomes more complicated (that is, more modern) as the linear story becomes disrupted by inset tales dealing with earlier matters, and as what one critic calls the "narrative authority" begins to disperse and operate on an increasing number of levels.[20] As the novel journeys southward, it evolves from ancient chronicle to medieval romance to premodern novel; it becomes more realistic, starts including recognizable geographies and datable historical events, and introduces more realistic characters from

more levels of society, until by the concluding book 4 we are in contemporary Rome among prostitutes and their protectors, corrupt officials, two punk kids on the run, and the pope's guards indulging in police brutality. (All this undercuts Rome's symbolic value as the heart of Catholicism.) It's not completely realistic at the end—in Rome a Jewish witch casts a near-lethal hex on Sigismunda—but it's easy to see in *Persiles and Sigismunda* a formal and stylistic dramatization of the maturation of the novel from simple wonder tales to nonlinear, self-conscious metafiction.

It sounds good on paper, but I doubt *Persiles and Sigismunda* will ever be rediscovered as a great novel.[21] Like *Don Quixote*, the chronology is contradictory—the novel seems to be taking place around 1560, but one incident places it in 1606—and there is some lazy plotting that takes way too many advantages of the romance novel's tolerance for coincidence. The protagonists display a "strange affectlessness," as Wilson admits (137), and most of the other characters are one-dimensional stereotypes (understandable in an epic, less so in a novel). The religious sentiments are embarrassingly unctuous (unless that betrays Cervantes' insincerity), the inset tales of love and jealousy too familiar from European story-cycles (and from the interpolated novellas in *Don Quixote*), and the whole thing too decorous and humorless. The writing is fine and full of rhetorical flourishes—Cervantes is especially fond of zeugma, as in "The fire began to blaze, and its flames fed those Policarpo felt in his heart," yoking actual flames with metaphoric ones—but nearly everyone speaks in the same elegant register. Only a sarcastic character named Clodio provides any edge, and though his slanderous witticisms get him killed in book 2, in book 4 the narrator admits he was the only one "so heartless and malicious that he'd suspected the truth" (4.1). I'd like to believe he represents Cervantes, heartlessly and maliciously contriving a respectable Christian epic to win fame from the literary gatekeepers of his day—who, then as now, usually prefer a work that judiciously builds on the traditional rules to one that, like *Don Quixote*, cunningly subverts them—but I suspect this is another example of an author who misjudged his own work. *Persiles and Sigismunda* belongs on the same neglected shelf as Melville's *Clarel*, Hardy's *Dynasts*, and Faulkner's *Fable*, ambitious books more beloved by their authors than by readers.

But before I take "leave of the Spaniard—a modern and innovative author of novel and delightful books" (4.2)—I want to go on a short romp with the rambunctious novella *The Dialogue of the Dogs,* the last of Cervantes' *Exemplary Stories* (pp. 250–305 in Lipson's edition). *El Coloquio de los perros* is actually a continuation of the collection's penultimate tale, "The Deceitful Marriage," in which a soldier named Campuzano tells his student friend Peralta how he got scammed by an adventuress, who gave him syphilis in exchange for everything she stole from him. (The jewels he impressed her with turn out to be fake, so he takes some satisfaction in scamming his scammer.) While sweating out the cure in Valladolid, Campuzano swears he overheard two dogs talking of matters high and low over the course of two nights, which he recorded word for word. His friend is incredulous, but agrees to read the soldier's manuscript; the short story (or prologue to the novella) concludes, "The Ensign lay back in his chair, the Graduate opened the notebook, and on the first page he saw the following title—"

The Dialogue of the Dogs is cast in playbook form (like earlier Spanish novels such as Rojas's *Celestina* and Delicado's *Portrait of Lozana*). The dogs Berganza and Cipión believe their "unexpected ability to speak" portends "some great calamity is threatening mankind" (251), but not to waste the opportunity, they agree Berganza will relate the story of his life one night, and Cipión his the following night. (We get only Berganza's tale; Campuzano withholds the other. And note "Campuzano" and "Cervantes" begin with the same initial and have the same number of letters; a former soldier, Cervantes mocks his own transition from soldier to author via this character.) Through this magniloquent mutt Cervantes airs his unmuzzled views on a variety of topics, especially on genres of fiction. Just as *Galatea* subverts the pastoral, *Don Quixote* the chivalric novel, and *Persiles and Sigismunda* the ancient Greek romance, Cervantes' canine colloquy subverts the Spanish picaresque novel, then at the height of its popularity. Like the prototypical *Lazarillo de Tormes*, it features a young character making his way through the rough world of swindlers, criminals, witches, Gypsies, and other "rabble," as he calls them (a recurring target of criticism in Cervantes' fiction). After serving a number of low-class masters, Berganza ends up assisting the begging monks attached to the hospital at

which Campuzano is recovering, a parody of the pious ending of many picaresques.

This newish genre was rightly praised for its realism, but Cervantes shows that it's not realism or moral exemplars that make for good fiction (as many even today believe) but aesthetic bliss. Talking dogs? So much for realism. Moral exemplars? Our narrator is a syphilitic soldier, duped by an adventuress who spun a fiction he fell for like a naive reader. Berganza briefly serves a witch whose tales of satanic gatherings are clearly inspired by psychedelic drugs,[22] then a playwright whose obsession with fussily realistic details dooms his work to failure, and finally a poet working on an Arthurian romance based on what he mispronounces "the *History of the Quest for the Holy Brail*" (301), trivializing it as a quest for the Holy Skirt.[23] Cervantes goes out of his way to expose fiction and fiction-writers/tellers as being disreputable and unreliable, yet at the end Peralta (like the reader) is so delighted by Campuzano's shaggy dog story that he doesn't care if his friend made the whole thing up. "I appreciate the craftsmanship of the dialogue and its inventiveness, so be satisfied with that," he tells us (305). The skirt-chasing poet has studied Horace's *Ars Poetica*, but in Cervantes' final exemplary novella, a dogfight between various theories of fiction—Cipión frequently interrupts Berganza to criticize his narrative technique—he shows that writers can toss out the rulebook as long as the results are inventive and aesthetically satisfying.[24]

The picaresque genre Cervantes parodied was in full swing at the beginning of the 17th century in Spain, propelled by the extraordinary success of Mateo Alemán's *Guzman of Alfarache* (1599). In 1605, the same year Cervantes published the first part of *Don Quixote*, a literary rival named Francisco López de Úbeda brought out what is considered the first female-fronted example of the genre, *La pícara Justina*. As is usually the case in standard literary chronology, this isn't strictly true: the street-smart protagonist of Francisco Delicado's bawdy *Portrait of Lozana* (1528) is an adventuress who scams her way from Andalusia to Italy;[25] but Delicado was imitating an older novel (Rojas's *Celestina*), not creating a new genre.

López de Úbeda probably knew *Lozana*, but he was reacting against the pious *Guzman*, offering a clever girl in love with her life instead of a gloomy young man repenting of his.

Justina's story is simple, the only thing about this extravagant novel that is.[26] Justina Diez is the daughter of innkeepers, both of whom die under grotesque circumstances when she is in her teens. Bugged by her siblings, she leaves her hometown of Mansilla for nearby Arenillas, dancing, playing her castanets, and generally enjoying *la vie bohème* while dodging the inevitable attempts on her virginity. Abducted by a gang of roving students, she manages to get them drunk and leads them back to Mansilla, where they are mocked by the townspeople and she is honored. Hitting the road for a second time, Justina heads for the big city of León, where she engages in fraud, cock-teasing, blackmail, and other swindles, returning home again in triumph. "In examining my life, I can say that I hope to be good some day and even some night," she winks à la Mae West in book 2 (trans. Damiani, 52), but for now she enjoys the freedom of her unconventional life, though by this point she's picked up a case of VD. Her sisters and brothers still have it in for her, however, so she leaves home a third time to seek legal revenge, indulging in more juvenile delinquency while fending off the advances of a horny sacristan. Winning her lawsuit, she returns home and is courted by several disreputable suitors, settling on a soldier/gambler named Lozano, and promising to write a sequel about her later marriages, including one to Guzman of Alfarache!

As an author recollecting her life and committing it to paper years later, Justina is still grifting, promising more than she delivers, and distracting her mark with hilarious digressions and literary tricks as she pockets the royalties from her book. Her first-person account is framed by an elaborate, mock-scholarly format, beginning with a frontispiece allegorically depicting our heroine on a ship with Celestina and Guzman—Lazarillo is nearby in a rowboat—sailing on the River of Forgetfulness for the Port of Death: a harsh verdict on the picaresque life. Justina's narrative is preceded by a table of the 51 verse forms featured in the novel, a dedication, two prologues by a male editor, and Justina's own three-part introduction, addressed to her pen, ink, and paper. The narrative proper has marginal notes like a theological treatise, and each chapter begins with a

summarizing poem and ends with a fatuous moral by the editor. Weighing in at 400 pages, *Justina* is not as long as *Guzman*, but it's the most elaborately staged picaresque, the form itself indicating it was intended for the amusement of the nobles at the Spanish court rather than for the general reading public.

If the form didn't scare off the average reader, its linguistic density would have. Critic Joseph Jones has called *Justina* "a lexicographical museum of jargon, slang, technical vocabulary, proverbs and dialect—not to mention imitations of the pronunciation of drunkards—and a textbook of the figures of speech . . . and of thought" (416). Justina is an entertaining motormouth — "my clack is the perpetual motion, and never lies still" (trans. Stevens 5) —and commands an arsenal of rhetorical devices, which she fires off with Rabelaisian flare: metaphors, similes, personifications, conceits, puns, paronomasia, neologisms, euphemisms, metaplasms, Latinisms and Italianisms, regional slang, "phrases fancifully artificial or involved, farfetched images, elaborate wordplays, metaphors falling over one another in contradictory confusion, innumerable repetitions as well as rare and invented words" (Damiani [106], who gives examples of all these devices). Alexander Parker calls *Justina* "a treasure-house of the language of burlesque, a riot of verbosity in which popular speech is given an exuberant ornamentation by being overladen with the language of polite learning" (46)—all of which probably explains why this dense, often cryptic novel has never been fully translated into English (though there are Italian, French, and German versions; Captain Stevens' 1707 abridgment provides a pleasant two-hour read, but only skims the surface of the novel's complex language). In addition, López de Úbeda stuffed Justina's pretty head with his immense learning, rather lamely explaining she picked up her vast erudition from some books left at her parents' inn. There are references and allusions—usually facetious—to classical mythology, the Bible, lives of the saints, animal fables and folklore, medieval epics, and novels ranging from Apuleius's *Golden Ass* through Alberti's *Momus* and virtually every Spanish novel from *Celestina* to *Don Quixote* (which López de Úbeda apparently previewed in manuscript), along with countless works of history, theology, and philosophy. Damiani's critical edition needs nearly 1,200 footnotes to explicate this encyclopedic novel.

And the point of it all? Though López de Úbeda mocks some of the social concerns of the day—specifically noble Spaniards' obsession with the "purity" of their blood, unadulterated by Moors or Jews—his principal goal was to show that the novel should be a vehicle for profane play and vitality, not a form of Catholic confession and penance like *Guzman of Alfarache*. Arguing for a literary separation of church and state, the author gives us a choice between spending time with a morose penitent like Alemán's protagonist or a flippant *chica* who embraces the picaresque life not out of poverty or desperation but for the joyous freedom it offers, linguistic, and otherwise. I know who I'd choose for a reading date. We badly need an English translation of *Justina—¡ahora!*

Around the time *Justina* was published, a brilliant but quarrelsome writer/courtier named Francisco de Quevedo (1580–1645) produced what is considered the finest example of the Spanish picaresque, *The Swindler* (*La Vida del Buscón llamado Don Pablos*), which circulated in manuscript for 20 years until a bookseller bootlegged it in 1626.[27] An arrogant aristocrat who was proud of his pure blood, his royal connections (his mother was a lady-in-waiting at court), and his mastery of a half-dozen languages, Quevedo despised upstarts and let them have it with both barrels in this ferocious, cruel book. (Velásquez painted his portrait, looking like nobody you'd want to mess with.) His *pícaro* is named Pablos, whose disreputable family—father a barber/thief, mother a Moorish witch/prostitute, his uncle a hangman—condemns him to the dregs of society, which he is foolish enough (in Quevedo's baleful eyes) to aspire to leave, not to become an honest tradesman, which would indicate he knows his place, but "a man of leisure" (1.1).

Fate and an unforgiving author frustrate him at every turn: he goes to school around age twelve, where he is taunted by other students, then to a private tutor who starves him, then to the University of Alcalá (where Quevedo was educated), the setting of many misadventures involving spit, shit, piss, and vomit. *Justina* had some disgusting scenes—a dog chews the ear and part of the face off Justina's dead father, and her mother dies from suffocation while trying to stuff a large sausage down her throat—but *The Swindler* is relentless in its depiction of disgusting scenes and grotesque characters, though Quevedo makes it all entertaining in a black-humorous

way. At one point Pablos refers to Hieronymus Bosch's paintings (2.2), and *The Swindler* has the same lurid, nightmarish quality.

Pablos leaves school around age 16, already something of a thief and shoplifter, and spends the next two years graduating to an accomplished *buscón* (swindler). Still intent upon joining the upper classes—which he seems to think requires little more than wearing the right clothes and knowing the right people—he tries and fails to marry into money, becomes a professional beggar for a while, joins a theatrical troupe and becomes a hack playwright, then is strung along by a flirty nun, and finally joins a gang of thieves in Seville, where he gets drunk one night and kills two policeman. Rescued by a whore named Grajales, the couple escapes to America, hoping "things would go better in the New World and another country. But they went worse, as they always will for anybody who thinks he only has to move his dwelling without changing his life and ways" (2.10).

To hell (or America) with him, the reader is tempted to say. Quevedo makes sure the reader shares his disgust with Pablos, unlike our reaction to earlier *pícaros.* Lázaro has our sympathy until he sells out at the end, Guzman appeals to us for forgiveness, Justina charms our socks off (as she steals our watch), and Cervantes' four-legged *pícaro* is a good doggy. But even if you don't share Quevedo's reactionary views on heredity, Pablos elicits little more than a sense that he gets what he deserves. The vulgar *converso* learns to suck up to others at an early age and thereafter pretends to be something he isn't, often changing his name but never considering changing his ways, as he admits in the novel's final line. (And his announced destination of America sends a chill down the spine; what's the future of that brave new world with such people in it?)

The Swindler is a superb novel in every way. The narrative flows smoother than the episodic picaresques it modeled itself on, the style is witty and sophisticated (without overdoing it like *Justina*), the settings are described with dirty realism (while in jail Pablos takes precautions to avoid anal rape), the psychology of the delinquent/parvenu is insightful, and the satire is wide enough to encompass not only swindlers like Pablos but society at large as he meets other chancres on the Spanish body politic. The assorted members of the justice system he runs up against are invariably corrupt, a Genoese banker he meets leads him to aphorize "conscience in

business men is a bit like virginity in whores—they sell it when they haven't got it any more" (1.10), and the clergy is mocked throughout as Pablos regularly compares his actions to a priest's, as when a fellow criminal accompanies him on a new scam: "This was just to make sure I knew the tricks, like a priest saying his first Mass" (2.2). As an accomplished poet, Quevedo pours scorn on "that species of vermin called poets" and inserts "A Proclamation Against All Idiot, Useless and Rubbishy Poets" that, among its articles, would "impose perpetual silence on them regarding the sky and establish close[d] seasons for the Muses, just as for hunting and fishing . . ." (1.10). Pablos' brief career in the theater unleashes another storm of outrage from our author, and even Pablos comes to regard it as a "wicked profession" (2.9). Like the novels of Céline and Genet, *The Swindler* depicts a sordid world with sardonic humor and occasional flights of fanciful imagery, as in this description of the private tutor who almost starves Pablos to death:

> His eyes were sunk so deep in his head that they were like lamps at the end of a cave; so sunken and dark that they looked like a draper's windows. His nose was partly Roman and partly French, because it was poxy with cold sores (not the real pox of course; it costs money to catch that). His whiskers were pale, scared stiff of his starving mouth which was threatening to gnaw them. I don't know how many of his teeth he had missing: I suppose he had dismissed them as there was never any work for them to do. His neck was as long as an ostrich's and his Adam's apple looked as if it had been forced to go and look for food. (1.3)

It goes on, hilariously. Quevedo deals with caricatures, not characters, because he is intent on humiliating types, not individuals. The short novel is a delight to read, even in a watered-down translation—the original is so rich in wordplay that it has been deemed untranslatable—despite Quevedo's snobbery, prejudices, xenophobia, elitism, and antiquated determinism. As in *Justina*, the author's voice overrides that of the protagonist—we aren't expected to believe Pablos went to America and became a brilliant comic novelist—but whether Quevedo intended to write the definitive picaresque or convert the novel into a weapon for class warfare, *The Swindler* is a brutal triumph.

Spanish writers (and readers) continued to invest in the picaresque genre for another 50 years, but with diminishing returns. In 1612, Alonso Jerónimo de Salas Barbadillo (1581–1635) published *La Hija de Celestina* —expanded in 1614 as *La Ingeniosa Elena, hija de Celestina*—featuring a slicker, more criminal version of Justina who, after a brief career in swindling, murders her male accomplice and is strangled to death. Unlike other picaresques, it is told in the third-person and the origins of Elena's delinquency are postponed until later in the short novel, but otherwise it adds nothing to the genre. (The title was chosen to cash in on the evergreen popularity of Rojas's *Celestina*, just as other hacks at this time were writing sequels to *Lazarillo,* which was enjoying a revival.) Between 1624 and 1626 Jerónimo de Alcalá Yañez (1563–1632) published a lengthy, two-part novel in dialogue form entitled *Alonso, mozo de muchos amos* (Alonso, Servant of Many Masters). An 1804 edition changed the title to *El Donado hablador*, The Talkative Lay Brother, for Alonso is recalling his earlier life long after he's retired from the world. It contains plot elements familiar from *Lazarillo, Guzman*, and *The Swindler*, but the protagonist is a colorless, unreflective drifter who doesn't develop or learn anything from his experiences (including a short stint in Mexico). Alonso de Castillo Solórzano (1584–1648?) cranked out a number of picaresques in the 1630s and '40s, but his contribution to literary history is enshrined in the title of Peter Dunn's book *Castillo Solórzano and the Decline of the Spanish Novel*. *El Diablo cojuelo* (The Limping Devil, 1641) by Luis Vélez de Guevara (1579–1644) is sometimes lumped in with picaresques because the protagonist is a delinquent student like Quevedo's Pablos, and because after he frees the devil from an astrologer's bottle he is shown the seamier side of life in Madrid. (The novel is better known in Lesage's adaptation *The Devil upon Crutches*, which we'll meet in the next chapter.) In the same occult vein, *La Vida de Don Gregorio Guadaña* (1644) is the last and best-known section of a novel of reincarnation called *El Siglo pitagórico* (The Age of Pythagoras) by a Spanish Jew named Antonio Enríquez Gómez (1600–63), featuring a character who gets mixed up in a number of intrigues. Its wit and ingenuity remind some critics of Quevedo, but the novel is more a satire on social types than a true picaresque, and more influenced by French versions of picaresque than by Spanish originals.

The nadir of the Spanish picaresque was reached by an eponymous novel called *La Vida y hechos de Estebanillo González, hombre de buen humor* (The Life and Deeds of Little Stevie González, a Man of Merry Humor, 1646).[28] He's less a *pícaro* than a snotty punk, a petty criminal with no self-esteem, a drunk who stumbles from one episode to another, and who eventually rubs elbows with royalty by playing the buffoon. As a kid, Stevie earned enough of an education to toss around classical references and irreverent biblical allusions, and he's waggish enough to entertain his betters, but he has no illusions about himself: he admits he's a base coward, coldly selfish—"Experience having taught me to look to my own" (4)—and confesses he enjoys the vagabond life, despite its hardships: "I lived at my ease, and my debts were paid [usually by skipping out on them]; I valued not punctilios of honor, and made a jest of the notions of reputation; for in my opinion there is no life like that of a rake" (5).

One character calls Estebanillo "a second Lazarillo de Tormes" (2), but the novel lacks the earlier work's concern with social criticism or *Guzman of Alfarache*'s concern for the Catholic soul. "But what have I to do with that," Estebanillo sneers, "or who can mend a depraved generation? It is better for me to deliver my own follies than rail at the faults of others" (10). This is why many critics regard *Estebanillo González* as the nadir of the picaresque, for it abandons the genre's capacity for puncturing society's pretensions and settles for roguish adventures and cheap laughs. Here, an author is no longer a social critic but a clown.

The novel is entertaining enough: much of it reads like a comic police report, tracking Estebanillo's crime spree as he zigzags all over Europe (as far north as Poland), and Estebanillo's impudent, self-deprecating style is amusing. The novel gives a historically accurate account of life behind the lines during the middle of the Thirty Years' War (1618–48), and as the contemporary Spanish novelist Juan Goytisolo notes in a backhanded compliment: "By restoring cowardice and baseness as necessary parts of human life, Estebanillo does us all a service."[29] As a veteran conman, Estebanillo has probably been playing the reader for a fool all along, for near the end of the novel, he becomes the court jester to a Spanish viceroy and tells us: "Every night [an] abundance of Navarroise gentlemen, and among them Don Pedro Navarro, came to wait upon the viceroy, among

whom I played all my pranks, telling them the most unaccountable lies that ever were heard, always placing the scene in Germany or Poland, for fear they should find me out" (12). Earlier picaresque novels were confessions; *Estebanillo González* is a con.

By this point the picaresque had lost its primary meaning as the confession of a distressed character, ashamed of his or her delinquency, and had become the boast "by someone who delights in being a real-life example of it," as Parker complains. He goes on to bring down the curtain on the once-earnest Spanish version of the genre:

> The cynical and frivolous insensitiveness to anything that is dignified and decent, the total absence of an atom of self-respect in this last Spanish picaresque work is the justification for the earnestness with which the *genre* began, for it is precisely the degradation of human nature that Alemán felt so intensely and strove with such seriousness to redeem. Less than fifty years, therefore, witness the rise and fall of the picaresque novel in Spain. *Guzmán de Alfarache* (1599) and *Estebanillo González* (1646) are not only the first and the last, they are also the two extremes—the one, man's anguished awareness of his need for redemption; the other, man's frivolous insensitiveness to his own degradation. (77–78)

The one exception to this downward spiral from art to entertainment might be *The Life of the Squire Marcos de Obregón* (*Relaciones de la vida del escudero Marcos de Obregón*, 1618) by Vicente Espinel (1550–1624), a poet and guitarist highly regarded by Cervantes, Quevedo, and the other leading writers of his generation. *Marcos de Obregón* differs from other picaresques first in its structure, which is much more convoluted. Instead of the linear, childhood-to-adulthood narrative arc common to the genre, Espinel's novel begins when his autobiographical protagonist is in his mid-sixties (c. 1615), who then tells a story about when he was 50 and attached to the household of an arrogant physician and his randy wife. Leaving the doctor, he finds refuge from a storm in a hermitage, and only then, in the 10th chapter, does he begin to relate to a hermit his life story, beginning when he left home for college in the early 1570s. At the end of part 1 we return in time to the hermitage, and the next day, at the further prompting of the hermit, Marcos resumes his story, which he continues up to his fifties,

when he runs into the physician again, who tells a lengthy traveler's tale of what became of him and his wife after Marcos left them (desert island, one-eyed giants). Second, the novel differs in its moral orientation. Marcos's delinquent behavior is milder than that of Guzman, Justina, Pablos, and the rest, and far from embracing the criminal life (as they do), he frequently chastises himself for his lapses from prudent behavior, and indulges in what might be called picaresque behavior only to right a wrong.

Like Alemán, Espinel regards his novel as a vehicle for instruction: "my principal aim is to teach people how to endure troubles and misfortunes patiently."[30] And again like Alemán, he includes an allegory of critical reading in his prologue: two students on their way to Salamanca come across the burial stone of two lovers with the Latin inscription *Conditur unio* (union is formed) repeated twice; the first student hastily dismisses it as a redundancy, but the second broods on it and realizes the repeated phrase could mean "A great pearl is hidden," and beneath the stone finds an invaluable pearl on the neck of a skeleton. Espinel is asking us to read deeper than the surface adventures of a *pícaro* to uncover his pearls of wisdom. To be honest, they're not hard to find: most of Marcos's misadventures are followed by a lecture on responsible behavior, shorter and more secular than Alemán's tedious Catholic sermons. Most of these episodes are mildly amusing—Espinel may have borrowed some from Boccaccio and other sources, but most are autobiographical—his many digressions are diverting, and his moral lessons are sensible enough. For example, after a short period of gambling, Marcos lectures against it, pointing out that even those who win tend to squander the money on eating, drinking, and wenching—or as Major Langton renders it, "at taverns of gluttony, feasts of Bacchus, and sacrifices to Venus" (1.14).[31] Several times Marcos falls for a wily seductress with humorously humiliating results, followed by a what-was-I-thinking postmortem. His class-consciousness often gets him in trouble, for even though he's little better than a vagabond, he proudly tells a superior: "I am not of any trade, for in Spain gentlemen do not learn any trade, preferring rather to suffer want, or to go into service [to a nobleman], to engaging in trade" (2.7). His frequent lapses from gentlemanly standards lead to pages and pages of "self-condemnation"

(3.10), which at times gives Espinel's work the introspective tone of a modern novel.

But Espinel departs from picaresque novelists by treating his protagonist not as a delinquent or buffoon but as an ordinary person. Espinel insists "there is scarcely a being whose life would not furnish a grand moral history, provided a proper use were made of them" (1.15). This represents a significant shift in the history of the novel, away from royalty and extraordinary characters (high and low) to the average citizen, who would soon become the preferred protagonist of most novels. Consequently, Espinel self-consciously defends his sometimes mundane narrative choices: "It may seem that the object with which I write this book [moral instruction] is partly defeated by relating these trifling circumstances, but if the matter be well weighed, they will be found not deficient in substance; for I am not recounting the achievements of great princes and valiant generals, but the life of a poor squire . . ." (1.23).

Marcos de Obregón is appealing and, yes, instructive, but is not entirely successful because the author often forgot he was writing a novel, not his memoirs. As George Haley shows in his book-length study, "*Marcos de Obregón*, at once a partial autobiography of Vicente Espinel and a novel cast in the form of the autobiography of Marcos de Obregón, rests upon a mixture of several rhythms imperfectly coordinated, of several temporal planes that are never completely synchronized" (101). At several points, Marcos even relates adventures "which happened to the author of this book" (1.5; cf. 3.3, 3.14), which might sound like a metafictional flourish but is merely laziness, a failure on Espinel's part to aestheticize his memories to the requirements of fiction. While finding an almost Proustian quality in the discursive nature of the author/narrator's recollections, Haley goes on to state, "Espinel evidently could not keep his convoluted narrative straight in his own mind, probably because he wrote intermittently and rarely revised" (110). Espinel's remembrance of things past is complicated by his antagonistic view of memory and the burden it places on those (like him) who have had a rough life:

> Memory certainly appears to be a divine gift, for that it makes past events present; but still I consider it as the scourge of *unfortunate* men, for it is continually bringing before them their bad success, their past injuries and

> present misfortunes, suspicious as to the future, and the want of confidence they are apt to feel in everything. And as life is, at any rate, short, it is rendered shorter by this constant recurrence to distressing subjects. And consequently, for such [men] as these, *the art of forgetting* would be preferable to that of remembering. (3.14)

It's odd that a man with that attitude would choose to write an autobiographical novel; by the time he wrote it, Espinel had taken orders and was choirmaster at a Madrid church, so perhaps the novel was an act of confession for which he hoped to receive absolution. Thus it looks back to the religiose *Guzman of Alfarache* and would soon inspire French picaresque writers (especially Lesage, who stole shamelessly from *Marcos de Obregón*), but its conflicted attitude and tortured self-consciousness point the way to the modern novel.

While the picaresque remains Spain's greatest contribution to the development of the European novel, other Spanish writers revamped other genres with interesting results. In 1619, after a long delay, the second half of Ginés Pérez de Hita's two-part novel *The Civil Wars of Granada* (*Las Guerras civiles de Granada*) was published, a ragged but influential work credited as Spain's first historical novel. The first and better half had been published back in 1595 and was an attempt to give fictional form to historical documents and border ballads about the final years of Muslim Granada before it was conquered by Christians under King Ferdinand in 1492. The second half, finished in November 1597 but not published until 1619—by which time Pérez de Hita may have been dead—dramatizes the 1568 rebellion of the Moors and their failed attempt to retake Granada.[32] Together they form a two-part novel that attempts to mix history, medieval romance, poetry, and war reportage—the author fought on the Spanish side during the 1568 revolt—which doesn't quite cohere aesthetically but which paved the way for the more polished historical novels of the 19th century.

Like the magnolia-scented visions of the antebellum South still cherished by some Americans, Moorish Granada exerted a romantic appeal on many Spaniards long after Ferdinand demoted Muslims to second-class citizens,

and *The Civil Wars of Granada*—along with the earlier novella *El Abencerraje* (1565)—is largely responsible for the stereotyped view of valiant Moors and their exquisite ladies swanning about the Alhambra. Part 1 in particular is filled with medieval pageantry, bullfights and elaborate fetes, ridiculously courteous personal combats, blood feuds and betrayals, all soundtracked by dozens of ballads that supplement the narrative. The title refers to the factional fighting in part 1 between Granada's leading families, the noble Abencerrajes and the treacherous Zegrís; the latter have the ear of Granada's cruel king Boabdil (a Spanish corruption of abu-Abdullah), and the infighting that ensued weakened Granada to the point that its conquest was a walkover for the Christians.

Fumbling with this new hybrid, Pérez de Hita seems to have been uncertain whether he wanted to be a historian or a novelist. Like Cervantes, he claims his narrative is based on the manuscript of an Arab historian and pretends to be only its translator; but he lurches between recorded history—even naming some of his sources as he goes along—and romantic fiction. Too often fictitious embellishments are added to the narrative at awkward places, and some dramatic sequences are spoiled by an intrusive historical note about contradictory sources. Sometimes the many ballads recapitulate prose episodes (as in medieval literature), while at other times the author trusts the ballads to carry the narrative. (In part 2, the ballads occur at the end of each chapter.) The author's prejudices are blatant—he favors the As over the Zs, and Christians over the Muslims—which are certainly a novelist's prerogative but which reduce the book's claim to historical accuracy. He is sympathetic to the Moors—especially in part 2, where he regards their rebellion as a justifiable response to the Spanish "policy that unnecessarily outlawed all their cherished customs and traditions" (Carrasco-Urgoiti, 134)—but his Muslims do things forbidden by Islam (like creating pictorial representations of Muhammad), regularly cite Greco-Roman mythology, and (in the case of the Abencerrajes) secretly yearn to be Christians. That's what Washington Irving objected to most; dismissing the work as a "Spanish fabrication," he complained that the Muslim–Christian conflict in *The Civil Wars* "had been woven over with love tales and scenes of sentimental gallantry totally opposite to its real character; for it was, in truth, one of the sternest of those iron conflicts, sanctified by the

title of 'Holy Wars.' "[33] At any rate, Pérez de Hita's well-intentioned plea for greater tolerance of the Moors went unheeded; in 1609 King Philip III banished them completely from Spain, with disastrous economic and cultural results.

The prolific Lope de Vega (1562–1635) likewise experimented with the novel genre during the same period. He is celebrated primarily for his plays and poems (he wrote *thousands* of each), but he produced three novels—*La Arcadia* (1598), *El Peregrino en su patria* (The Pilgrim in His Own Land, 1604), and *Los Pastores de Belén* (The Shepherds of Bethlehem, 1614)—and a collection of four novellas, *Novelas a Marcia Leonarda* (1624), all of which are derivative and add nothing to their respective genres; Lope admits as much in the preface to *Novelas*, confessing fiction isn't his forte. But three years before he died, he published a brilliant hybrid work entitled *La Dorotea* (1632) that combines the form of a play with the extended narrative reach of a novel. (The English translation runs 260 pages.) He called it an "action in prose" (*acción en prosa*), a cool term that might have appealed to Kerouac. Although it resembles the play format Lope was most comfortable with, *Dorotea* was also inspired by earlier dramatic novels like Rojas's *Celestina* and Ferreira de Vasconcelos's *Eufrosina*, both of which he acknowledges in his prologue.[34] And he took from the pastoral novel the convention of incorporating songs and poems into the work, some several pages long, as well as its tolerance for extended philosophical discussions. The result is a tragicomic tour de force on love, disillusionment, and aesthetics.

Lope began the autobiographical novel in the 1590s, shortly after the melodramatic events that inspired it. For about four years (1584–88), Lope had an affair with an actor's wife named Elena Osorio, the daughter of one of his producers in Madrid, which ended badly after she dumped him when a rich new suitor showed up; Lope wrote some scurrilous poems about her and her relations in revenge, who then sued him, resulting in jail and banishment. Lope revived this early work in the 1620s when he was indulging in yet another affair with a married woman, 25 years younger than he, and complicated by the fact Lope had been ordained a priest in 1614 with its attendant vow of chastity. Lope retained the 1587–88 setting from the early version but added a lifetime's maturity and perspective to its

revision. As for *Dorotea*'s plot, I can't improve on the one translator Trueblood provides at the beginning of his massive study of the novel:

> Dorotea and the penniless poet Fernando have been lovers for five years. Her mother, Teodora, at the behest of her friend Gerarda, a go-between of sorts, decides to break up the liaison in order to clear the way for a more profitable lover, the wealthy *indiano* (Spaniard returning from the New World) Don Bela. After some soul-searching, Dorotea informs Fernando that she has no choice in the matter, he takes umbrage, they quarrel, and Fernando rides off desperately to Seville after prevailing on a former mistress, Marfisa, with a rigged-up story of having killed someone, to let him have her jewels. Dorotea attempts suicide, convalesces, and eventually accepts Don Bela.
>
> Three months after his departure Fernando returns to Madrid still obsessed with Dorotea, finds Don Bela in possession, meets him by chance under her windows and wounds him in a brief exchange of swordplay. Some days later he encounters the disguised Dorotea in the Prado, tells her his life story, and when she reveals herself, is reconciled with her. Arriving home in triumph, he encounters Marfisa, by now disabused, and is bitterly denounced by her. Fernando then reveals to his servant, Julio, that reconciliation has killed his ardor for Dorotea and that he proposes returning to Marfisa. He shares Dorotea surreptitiously with Don Bela for two more months, however, before abandoning her altogether. Dorotea, as much in love as ever, plays disconsolately with the thought of taking the veil. The accidental deaths of Don Bela and Gerarda bring the work to a close.[35]

Lope rewrote personal history to allow himself (as Fernando) to be the one who ends the affair, but otherwise is rather harsh on his younger, impetuous self. He makes him a foppish poet (rather than the competent dramatist Lope had been), partly as an excuse to include many of the poems Lope wrote to his later mistress, and partly because *Dorotea*, like Cervantes' *Galatea* (which Lope admired), is about the nature of poetry—or art in general—and the uses to which some people put it. Virtually all the characters in *Dorotea* write poetry, can recite it from memory, explicate it with scholarly ingenuity, or at the least have a keen appreciation of it. The

principals conduct their lives as though they were in a poem, as though they were the future heroes and heroines of the kinds of songs and ballads they admire. Like beret-wearing habitués of poetry coffeehouses today, they love to strike artistic poses, to show off their reading, and to live their lives according to their favorite books. The young Lope was at home in this bohemian milieu, "a demimonde of theater people and loose women, frequented by students, aristocrats, and others," as the translators explain, but when in trouble he resorted to "unrealistic schemes more suggestive of stage intrigues than of the everyday world, where they inevitably backfire" (271–72). The older Lope who wrote *Dorotea* looked back with a mixture of censure and bemusement at the phase many of us go through when, drunk on literature, we fail to distinguish between art and life.

Dorotea consists solely of dialogue—no stage instructions or authorial interventions—and at the surface level it is intoxicating. The dialogue sparkles with Mozartean grace, Wildean wit, Cole Porterly kick, Spackmanesque sophistication, and Therouvian erudition. Each of the male leads (Fernando, Bela) has a servant/companion (Julio, Laurencio) as well read as their masters, and the small cast is rounded off by bookish friends of Fernando's like Ludovico and César, who help make this novel sound at times like a graduate seminar in Renaissance culture. (In act 4, Ludovico, César, and Julio spend *22 pages* explicating a "terrible sphinx of a sonnet," a parody of the baroque poetry of Luis de Góngora.) Dorotea, a harpist who occasionally sings her own compositions, is a sucker for poetry—"she is wild about hemistichs" (2.1)—and can blame most of her romantic troubles on failing to distinguish between Fernando the poet and Fernando the man, just as Fernando remains blind to his own faults through undeserved identification with the lovelorn poets of classical literature.

Beneath the sparkling verbal surface, however, is ugly reality. We learn that Fernando once slapped Dorotea for praising a bullfighter; Fernando asks Ludovico to slash Gerarda's face for interfering; and Gerarda—like her model in *Celestina*—is an 80-year-old bawd who traffics in prostitution and witchcraft. Nearly all the characters (not Lope) express a demeaning, patriarchal view of women—"a woman's only good is to furnish the stuff out of which men's children are made" (1.1)—even though the women in the novel are as bright and witty as the men, especially Dorotea, who emerges as the wisest person in the book. To her Lope gives the novel's

take-away lesson: “One must prize disillusionment over beauty. Everything runs its course, everything palls, everything comes to an end” (5.11).

Except art. Elena Osario of Madrid is no more, but she lives forever in *Dorotea*. Despite Dorotea’s mistreatment by Fernando, the fact he’s writing poems about her thrills her, even though her maid Celia dismisses them as “a few lines of verse, some marginal notes, and the newfangled words used by people who pride themselves on speaking like no one else.” Dorotea counters, “Is there greater treasure for a woman than to find herself made immortal? Since beauty comes to an end and no one seeing her thereafter believes she ever possessed it, the verse in praise of her bears testimony, living on in her name” (2.2). Even though this is more likely the older Lope making amends for his younger self than a desire the real-life Elena Osario actually expressed, it adds to the sense throughout the novel that this work was Lope’s grand statement on life and art, the one work he wanted to be remembered by. (He didn’t even bother to save the scripts of most of his earlier plays, regarding them as ephemeral work for pay.) Speaking through his cultured characters, he provides a list of the finest poets of his youth—including Cervantes, Espinel, “and this Lope de Vega just starting out” (4.2)—pays tribute to his favorite poets and philosophers of the past, shows off his wide learning (admittedly cribbed from many secondary sources, as the translators’ notes indicate), denounces astrology and other pet peeves, mulls over aesthetics, and comments metafictionally on *Dorotea* as it progresses. At one point Julio says, “And if Don Fernando’s love affair were part of a play, we would have to throw the rules out the window” (3.4). Like all experimental writers, that is exactly what Lope did, resulting in what one of his translators calls “A play that is hardly a play and a novel that is not a novel” (275). Lope knew he was creating a unique hybrid of drama and fiction, and not surprisingly includes a self-assessment of his “action in prose” within its pages. Ludovico insists “Anything sui generis, applauded, and grand, though unforgivably outlandish, should be deemed a genuine achievement” (4.3). Agreed.

A Brief Digression on Verse Novels

Speaking of hybrids in Spanish fiction: The publisher of a recent edition of Góngora’s *Solitudes* (*Soledades*, 1612) calls it a “novel in verse,” but I’m not going to treat it here because it’s a tough call. It’s

easy enough to spot a modern verse novel because the author or publisher describes it as such on the title page, but it's trickier to identify older works that might belong to this vague genre. Making things harder still is the odd fact that few critics have addressed the topic: if there's a book devoted to defining, theorizing, and historically accounting for the genre, I couldn't find it, only a few essays—Dino Felluga's "Verse Novels" and Catherine Addison's "The Verse Novel as Genre: Contradiction or Hybrid?"—both of which deal mostly with obvious examples from the Victorian era onward.[36]

Conventional wisdom identifies Pushkin's *Eugene Onegin* (1833) as the first novel in verse, but as usual conventional wisdom is wrong: in 1784 the British author Anna Seward published *Louisa: A Poetical Novel in Four Epistles*, which is, if not the first verse novel, the first to announce itself as such in the subtitle. A century ago, a critic named W. M. Dixon proposed an even earlier English work, William Chamberlayne's *Pharonnida* (1659), as "our first, and perhaps still our best novel in verse" (Felluga, 172), though this is complicated by the fact Chamberlayne later rewrote it in prose as *Eromena* (1683), suggesting he didn't consider the earlier version to be a novel. In my previous volume, I identified a number of premodern fictions as verse novels based on content and inspiration. That is, if a long narrative poem dealt with typical novelistic matter and was inspired by prose novels, then I felt comfortable calling it a novel. I treated the metrical narratives of Byzantine writers like Niketas Eugenianos and Andronikos Palaiologos as novels because they were love stories deliberately based on older Greek prose novels, whereas I disqualified the metrical narratives of Chrétien de Troyes (pace Denis de Rougemont, who calls them novels) because they dealt with legendary matter and were based on French *lais*. Similarly, there are Sanskrit verse narratives that follow in the tradition of older Sanskrit novels rather than mythological epics like the *Ramayana.* Setting aside the objection—which I would be the first to make—that a novel can be about anything, these distinctions (novelistic matter and models) would eliminate epics and mythological poems, medieval *chansons de geste* and allegories, long ballads, and the like. Góngora's *Solitudes* strikes

me as belonging to this camp, for the emphasis is more on the verse than the narrative.

But these distinctions raise difficulties when we reach the early modern period: no one would call *Paradise Lost* a novel, because it is clearly in the epic tradition;[37] but how about Samuel Butler's *Hudibras*, since it was modeled on *Don Quixote*? How about Pope's mock-epic, *The Dunciad*?—the proportion of prose to verse in the final, 1743 version makes it look more like Nabokov's *Pale Fire* than a poem. Byron's *Don Juan* is usually called an epic poem or epic satire, though it has nothing to do with the epic (heroic, often legendary adventures leading to the foundation of a race or nation) and everything to do with rollicking 18th-century novels like *Tom Jones.* (A few critics have indeed called *Don Juan* a verse novel, but only in passing). On the other hand, no one, I think, would consider his *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* a novel, for it and other Romantic verse narratives are firmly in the poetic tradition, many of them "the modern equivalent of the medieval or minstrel romance."[38] This doesn't account for all Romantic works, of course; in the preface to the 1815 edition of his poems, Wordsworth acknowledged what he called the "metrical novel," but he did not attach that label to his *Prelude*, even though, as Felluga notes, it is arguably "one of the first *bildungsromane* and even *künstlerromane* [artist's story], two novelistic subgenres that are integral to the development of the novel as a distinctive form" (172).

Shortly after he began work on *Eugene Onegin*, Pushkin wrote to a friend, "I am writing now not a novel, but a novel in verse—the devil of a difference."[39] A book is needed to explore that devilish difference, but for now, we can call a lengthy narrative poem a verse novel if it eschews the epic and/or fantasy tradition (which eliminates books like Wieland's *Oberon*) and focuses instead, as Felluga suggests, on "those characteristics that made the novel such a popular success (narrative sequentiality, realistic description, historical referentiality, believable characters, dramatic situations, fully realized dialogism and, above all, the domestic marriage plot)" (171). All of those qualities characterize Goethe's *Hermann and Dorothea* (1797), yet he seems to have considered it more a domestic epic than a versified novel, which is why

I reluctantly decided to omit it from my discussion of his novels. Consequently, I won't be including very many of what could arguably be called verse novels in this volume.

After Pérez de Hita invented the historical novel and Lope de Vega reconfigured the dramatic novel, the worldly María de Zayas (1590–1660?) revamped the story-cycle novel. In my last volume I argued that fictions like *The Arabian Nights* and Boccaccio's *Decameron* can be considered long novels *if* there is as much emphasis on the characters in the frame-tale as there is on the tales themselves; that is, if the tales are the main attraction and their narrators merely talking heads, it's a thematic anthology, but if the function of the tales is to dramatize the concerns of their narrators and listeners in the frame, it can be read as a novel—an unconventional novel, to be sure, but still a novel. The protagonists of most novels undergo experiences that test, reveal, develop, or modify their character; in story-cycle novels, the protagonists in the frame undergo *vicarious* experiences (via the tales) to the same purpose. In the *Decameron* or Marguerite of Navarre's *Heptameron,* the inset tales exist partly (if not primarily) to reveal the sexual dynamics between the characters in the frame-tale, which is why I treated them as novels, as opposed to books like Ser Giovanni's *Percorone* and Straparola's *Facetious Nights*, whose utilitarian frames relegate them to short-story collections. The same goes for Giambattista Basile's *Tale of Tales* (*Lo cunto de li cunti*, aka the *Pentamerone*), which was published in Italy around this time (1634–36).[40] All of which is to say Zaya's two books of fiction—*The Enchantments of Love* (*Novelas amorosas y ejemplares*, 1637) and its sequel, *The Disenchantments of Love* (*Desengaños amorosos*, 1647)—might best be read together as a 700-page novel.

Zayas's two-part novel is about disillusionment (*desengaño*), a recurring theme in Golden Age Spanish literature (1580–1680), and not unrelated to Spain's spectacular decline during that period from world power to provincial backwater. Alonso Quixano is *dis*-illusioned on his deathbed, finally seeing the true nature of things, and a pack of *pícaros* exposed the shabby interiors behind the illusory façades of church, state, and Spanish society. *Dorotea* dramatizes *desengaño*. Like Lope, Zayas focuses on the illusions (enchantments) of love, and offers both a morning-after appraisal

of the disillusions that often follow courtship as well as an exposé of the true nature of the relations between women and men.

In the frame-tale, 10 aristocrats of Madrid come together on Christmas Eve to entertain Lisis, a beauty suffering from quartan fever. Her mother Laura organizes a five-day party during which two guests each night will tell a romantic tale—an "enchantment," as she calls it. "In using this term she wanted to avoid the common term 'novella," so trite that it was now out of fashion."[41] (In using this term Zayas wants to emphasize the illusions those in love or lust are under.) From the first night there is erotic tension in the group: prudent Lisis is in love with the dashing Juan and is prepared to marry him, but he's more interested in her daring cousin Lisarda. Diego is also interested in Lisia, which Juan resents. Miguel has eyes for Filis, but has a rival in Lope; Alvaro is in thrall to Matilde, but she is accompanied by Alonso; Juan's beautiful cousin Nise is fancy-free. Adding to the tension, every tale the women tell is bitterly resentful of the illusions men scam women with in order to have their way with them. The Christmas spirit is the farthest thing from their minds.

Boyfriend-stealing Lisarda spins the first enchantment, which introduces all of Zayas's themes. A wanderer named Fabio spots a shepherd boy who looks like a girl. "But, because the place was so dangerous for a woman, Fabio really doubted what he was seeing," and immediately chastises himself for that misogynistic assumption: "He told himself that that doubt only accused him of not being very brave himself" (16), brave enough to admit a woman can handle herself in a dangerous place. And a woman it is: the shepherd turns out to be a noblewoman from Madrid named Jacinta who has hidden herself in the country to nurse her unrequited love for a two-timer named Celio. (Just as Jacinta appropriates men's clothing, Zayas—Spain's first significant woman author—appropriates a hitherto male profession.) While Fabio politely listens to her tale, Jacinta ticks off one feminist complaint after another:

> We women are brought up so deficiently that very little strength is expected of us simply because we have beautiful eyes. (17)

> If it won't bore you, I'll recite a poem for you, for even though it's written by a woman, it's all the better—it isn't right to excuse the errors men make in their poetry because they are taught in all their studies how to refine and adorn their verses with art; but a woman, who has only her own instinct, deserves praise for everything that's good and pardon for any defects. (19)[42]

> It didn't amaze [Celio] that I composed poetry. That's no miracle in a woman whose soul is just the same as a man's, and maybe it pleases Nature to perform this wonder, or maybe men shouldn't feel so vain, believing they're the only ones who enjoy great talent. (36–37)

> When I think about the tricks and strategies men use to conquer women and overcome their weakness, I consider them all traitors. (38)

Though disillusioned, Jacinta remains stubbornly in love with Celio after he betrays her—she admits "I stopped being wise and fell in love with a man who despised women" (38)—because she is determined to portray "women's constancy" over men's infidelity. Jacinta returns to Madrid, but only to immure herself in a convent: "I made a commitment to love, and that's how I shall die" (44). She may be disillusioned about Spanish men, but not yet about the patriarchal Spanish culture that equates "constancy" with throwing one's life away.

Juan praises the tale extravagantly to butter up Lisarda, but Lisis cuts short his shameless flattery by picking up a guitar and singing a song in which she identifies with Jacinta's constancy. "Few in the room missed the fact that these verses sung by the beautiful Lysis were aimed at the disdain with which don Juan repaid her love" (45), and Juan's friend Diego praises her song to express his infatuation with her, earning Juan's ire. In this way Zayas interlocks the fame and the inset tales so that the latter pique our interest not for their own sake—they are entertaining enough, but derivative of Italian novellas and a few by Cervantes and Lope de Vega—but for what they tell us about how Lisis and her guests reconcile their culture's gender assumptions and their own erotic longings.

The betrayed woman of the second tale narrated that night (by Matilde) reacts differently than Jacinta. After being humped and dumped by a

philanderer named Jacinto, Aminta cuts her hair short and disguises herself as a man, becomes his servant, then one night stabs him to death in his sleep, along with his floozy Flora—a name popular with Roman whores, we're told—who had helped him deceive Aminta, correctly guessing he'd tire of her quickly and return to her lascivious arms. Though Zayas is hard on men, she's harder on women like Flora; the narrator accuses her of being "Terribly evil because, as a woman who's evil, you have the advantage over men. Love excuses don Jacinto, deception excuses the unfortunate Aminta, but for Flora there is no excuse. Don't be amazed at men's deceptions any longer, for Flora surpasses them all in the expression of her love, if indeed it's really love" (59). As Jacinta said in the previous tale, anticipating Pat Benatar, "Love represents a battlefield and a combat zone where, with fire and sword, it struggles to vanquish honor, guardian of the soul's fortress" (38).

The war between the sexes wages on over the next four nights with similar tales of lust, betrayal, and revenge. Those the gentlemen tell, condemning "clever women who, trusting in their ingenuity, seek to deceive men" (129), are milder than the ladies' sob stories, even comical at times. Nevertheless, Zayas has one of the men admit "there are a hundred good women for each bad one; not all women are bad, and it isn't right to confuse the good with the bad and blame them all" (120). Zayas' feminist message is reiterated throughout, most forcefully in Nise's tale on the third night when a betrayed woman apostrophes:

> Why, vain legislators of the world, do you tie our hands so that we cannot take vengeance. Because of your mistaken ideas about us, you render us powerless and deny us access to pen and sword. Isn't our soul the same as a man's soul? If the soul is what gives courage to the body, why are we so cowardly? If you men knew that we were brave and strong, I'm sure you wouldn't deceive us the way you do. By keeping us subject from the moment we're born, you weaken our strength with fears about honor and our minds with exaggerated emphasis on modesty and shame. For a sword, you give us the distaff, instead of books, a sewing cushion. (175)

After the final story on the fifth day—a corker about a treacherous woman, a fratricidal man, and the devil himself—the party breaks up with

plans to reassemble on New Year's Day for the wedding of Lisis and Diego, whose courtship has progressed in tandem with the tales. But at the beginning of volume 2, Lisis lapses into depression and fever—throughout the novel illness is a metaphor for unrequited love—and postpones the wedding for over a year. When she recovers, partly with the help of her new Moorish slave-girl Zelima, she arranges for another storytelling party for Holy Week, to conclude with her marriage to Diego on the day before Lent. This time, the rules are different: only women will be allowed to tell tales—the male guests are told to listen and learn—and they should be true stories, or "disenchantments," to expose the hit-and-run tactics men use to seduce women, "and also to defend women's good name in an age when it has fallen so low that no one ever hears or speaks a good word about them" (42). The sensible feminism of volume 1 becomes more strident in volume 2, though that's perfectly understandable given the ingrained prejudices intelligent woman like Zayas faced then. Still, *The Disenchantment of Love* could be subtitled *The Man-hater's Bible*.

The beautiful and talented slave Zelima narrates the first tale, all dolled up and rocking the 17th-century equivalent of a miniskirt: "It was so short it scarcely reached the turn of her ankle" (41). Born a Christian, at age 14 she attracted an unwanted suitor who, frustrated by her demurrals, raped her—the first of many acts of rape, murder, and torture in this second, decidedly darker volume. Persuaded she can salvage her honor only by marrying him, she somehow falls in love with the rapist and pursues him around the Mediterranean, disguised as a Moorish slave with a brand on her face. (Her slave status is Zayas's unsubtle judgment of the position of all women in patriarchal Spain, though the fact Zelima brands herself a slave complicates matters.) Spurned by the rapist for chasing after him, she sells herself into real slavery and winds up in Lisis's household, and at the conclusion of her tale announces her plan to marry the only man she can trust: Jesus. Recalling the first story in *Enchantments* and foreshadowing the conclusion of *Disenchantments*, the tale makes the dubious point that a woman can feel safe and in control of her life only in a convent, as a slave in Jesus' celestial seraglio. Now under a different form of enchantment, Zelima gushes, "I don't want or need men nor do I care whether they're false or true, because I've chosen a beloved who will never neglect me, a spouse who will never spurn me and I can see him with his arms open wide to receive me" (81). I

wish I could report Zayas is being ironic, that Zelima's decision to trade up from men's slave to "God's slave" (81) is delusional and self-defeating, but I'm afraid she's serious. (We know little about Zayas's life, but there's no indication she herself joined a convent.[43])

The next story is even more religiose, which is why Zayas's books later found favor with some clergymen even as others condemned their licentiousness. Following another seduction, rape, and flight to a convent, this one adds the first of many male "honor killings" as Zayas ratchets up her screed against men; in fact, she and her narrators encourage women to use the same kind of violence against men with instances of torture, murder, even decapitation. The third story, narrated by the still-single Nise, brings in more supernatural elements and horrors, and from this point on Zayas's tales begin sounding like the Gothic literature that would follow in the 18th century. They also begin sounding more didactic as the narrators lecture at greater length about men's mistreatment of women. Zayas anticipates the title of Germaine Greer's famous 1970 polemic when she has one of her narrators complain "men deprive women of the exercise of both letters and arms, the same way that Moors do to Christians who serve among their women, turning them into eunuchs to be sure of them" (141). The lecturing quickly becomes tedious, repetitious, and aesthetically unnecessary, for Zayas's tales dramatize her concerns effectively enough; one narrator interrupts herself, "Who but a man could be so deviously treacherous? But I shall say no more, for the events speak for themselves" (100). They do indeed, and Zayas's lack of trust in her material leads to rhetorical overkill. Her insistence that the tales in the second volume are based on real life betrays a similar mistrust in the power of fiction.

Much of this lecturing occurs in the interludes between tales, which further encourages treating the two volumes as a novel, for it becomes obvious Lisis arranged for this second soirée to explain why she has decided, like so many of the tales' disenchanted protagonists, to reject patient Diego's marriage proposal and enter a convent. She appears on the third and final night wearing not the dress and jewels Diego had sent, but one exactly like that of her BFF Zelima.[44] "This sight causes no little apprehension in don Diego" (306). After she narrates the final tale that night —volume 1 features 10 tales spread over five nights, volume 2 10 over

three—she delivers one final lecture against men and announces she plans to join Zelima in a convent, "from where, as from behind a safety barricade, I intend to observe what happens to everybody else" (403). Thus the 700-page work has been about Lisis's unsentimental education and her decision to embrace feminist separatism.

Zayas was influenced by Cervantes' *Exemplary Stories*, but she also seems to have been encouraged by the metafictional shenanigans of *DQ2* that made a mess of its chronology. *Enchantments* is set in the 1630s and was published in 1637; *Disenchantments* (1647) is set a little over a year later, but we're told at the end that the year is 1646, meaning the first volume is set during the last week of 1644—seven years *after* it was published. Characters in *Disenchantments* refer to the publication of *Enchantments* (113), and in the frame-story to the second night, Zayas boasts of the reception of *Enchantments*: "If a few people criticized it, a hundred applauded it. Everyone rushed out to buy it and they're still buying it. It's already been through three printings, two legitimate and one pirated" (168), meaning Zayas's characters are aware they are characters in a book, and preparing a sequel as they speak. In the introduction to her tale on the final night, Lisis states *she*'s the author of this work, but on the final page the narrator addresses Fabio, the sympathetic auditor of the first tale in *Enchantments*, as though the whole thing has been a continuation of Jacinta's narrative. It's a confusing parting shot in this 700-page "war against all men" (367), a sustained attack on patriarchy and misogyny, as well as a stirring defense of women and an early classic of feminism. And if Zayas failed to recognize her beloved Catholicism as one of the pillars of her despised patriarchy, she is to be praised for crashing the men's club of Spanish fiction and opening the doors for future "Homers in skirts and petticoats or Virgils wearing a chignon" (168).

María de Zayas's style is plain, unpolished; one of her English translators noticed, "She writes like a woman in a hurry, impatient often of the niceties of structure and balance."[45] At the opposite end of the stylistic spectrum is the last 17th-century Spanish novel of consequence, Baltasar Gracián's extravagant, imaginative allegory *The Master Critic* (*El Criticón*), published in three parts in 1651, 1653, and 1657. Gracián (1601–58) was a leading exponent and theorist of the elaborate, baroque style known as

conceptismo, where concepts (or conceits) were the subject of ingenious, extended displays of wit and erudition. A worldly Jesuit constantly in trouble with his superiors, Gracián wrote several nonfiction works before dedicating the final years of his life to this three-part novel, a 600-page dramatization of his bitter view of life in moribund Spain. One critic has convincingly argued that it "is the ultimate and most intricately encyclopedic statement and critical examination of the individual's situation in the troubled seventeenth century; it accomplishes this statement and examination with a virtuosity of wit and verbal expression that are the very pinnacle of the period's style."[46]

Set during the irresponsible reign of Philip IV (1621–65), the novel opens like a cerebral adventure story: a shipwrecked man washes up on the shore of the island of Saint Helena, which for Gracián's purposes is uninhabited except for his rescuer, "a sprightly youth, an angel in his appearance," who has no language.[47] The "grateful naufrague" introduces himself as Critilo and names his rescuer Andrenio (Greek for "natural man"), and after teaching this noble savage Spanish he learns that Andrenio was raised by animals in a den. As he grew older he gradually began to apprehend the nature of the universe, from whose perfect design he eventually inferred a divine creator.[48] The intellectual Critilo validates Andrenio's homemade theology and begins to tell his own story when the two spot some Spanish galleons returning from the New World. Andrenio has never seen a ship, so we're given this exchange, typical of Gracián's metaphoric style:

> "I see," said he, "some wandering mountains, or winged sea-monsters, or else some clouds."
>
> "No," said Critilo, "they are ships, though you have said aptly in calling them clouds, for they rain gold into Spain." (4, punning on *nubes* [clouds] and *naves* [ships])

After boarding this ship en route for Spain, Critilo explains he was born of Spanish parents in Goa (India), where he led a reckless youth and fell in love with a girl named Felisanda, of another Spanish expatriate family. Killing a rival suitor of hers, he was sent to prison, where he mended his ways and educated himself in literature and philosophy. Felisinda returned

to Spain and arranged for his pardon, and it was during Critilo's voyage home that he was thrown overboard near Saint Helena.

When Critilo and Andrenio arrive in Spain, Gracián abandons novelistic realism for baroque allegory. Warning Andrenio of the "vast distance and difference you will find between the civil and the natural world" (5), Critilo and the rube first witness a group of pampered children attacked by wild animals, symbolizing the evil unleashed by lenient parents who allow a child to live in "folly than to displease his palate with the bitter pills and remedies of correction; . . . whereby the evil of depraved nature prevailing, allures the tender infant into the valley of beasts to be made a prey unto vice, and a slave to passions" (5). This is Gracián's modus operandi throughout: he literalizes a concept ("a prey to vice"), pushes it to extremes via extended metaphors, and then explains the allegory and moral lesson to be learned. Critical Critilo provides some of the explanations, while others are provided by various symbolic guides—the centaur Chiron, treacherous Proteus, the wise woman Artemia—whom the wanderers meet as they travel throughout Spain, witnessing the country's moral depravity. Predictably, Andrenio is a sucker for attractions like the Palace of Falsimundo ("false world"), the City of Deceit, the Cave of Lust, and other allegorical sites, though by the end of part 1 he is disabused of these illusions (another instance of *desengaño*) and learns he is actually Critilo's son, the result of his father's dalliance with Felisinda, who abandoned her baby on Saint Helena on the way back to Spain.

In parts 2 and 3, father and son make their way from Aragon to France, Germany, and eventually to Italy, their moral education tested again and again as they pass through such places as the Customs House of Life, the Palace of Sofisbella ("beautiful wisdom"), the Convent of Hypocrisy (where Gracián's propensity for anticlerical satire kept him in hot water with the authorities), the Palace without Doors, the Cave of Nothingness (where three-fourths of humanity spends its time in Gracián's elitist opinion), and finally the Island of Immortality, where those who make contributions to culture are rewarded. (The novel ends where it began, on an island isolated from women and the masses.) Ostensibly the pilgrims have been searching for Critilo's wife, but in the allegorical scheme they are searching not for Felisinda but for *Felicidad* (happiness), which eludes them until they settle for the immortality that results from achieving clarity

regarding the nature of the world and doing memorable work (such as writing a novel like *The Master Critic*). The goal is pagan and worldly, not Christian, and is achievable only by those sophisticated and educated enough to make the right moral choices.

Gracián's world is closer to Dante's hell than Bunyan's Vanity Fair, and his worldview closer to classical humanism than to Christianity. To see the world as he sees it, Gracián provides both the reader and Andrenio with "a glass, which changed the common prospect of the world, and made all things appear with their natural defects, though disguised with the mask which fraud had put on them: for so ought everyone to behold this world with an eye different from the vulgar view" (7). Gracián's outlook is bitter, pessimistic, misogynistic *and* misanthropic, as savage as Swift's, but what is intriguing about *The Master Critic* is the almost surrealistic nature of his allegories, the "fantasical humour" (10) of his imaginative personifications. The effect is all the more startling because the narrative doesn't occur in a dream or vision, as in most allegories, but in recognizable, realistic settings. Our pilgrims notice a shop advertising " 'here is sold the best and the worst,' and going in, they found that they were tongues; the best were those that held silence" (13), which conjures up an image of tongues hanging from hooks like skinned ducks in a Chinese grocery store. Another shop promises " 'a sovereign remedy against all diseases,' to which there crowded such a multitude of customers that the shop could not receive their feet, but their heads being empty, and without substance, were more easily contained in a narrow compass" (13), as though these customers had detachable heads that can float like balloons into tight areas. (The "sovereign remedy" is patience.)

Like López de Úbeda, Gracián is considered a "difficult" author, a proud graduate of the "literary school that relishes obscurity for its own sake,"[49] and indeed without a well-annotated edition, most of the individual targets of Gracián's satire are lost. He's a bitter pill for some readers to swallow, his novel "rather a torment, and spectacle to exercise my patience, than a pastime for my pleasure," as Critilo complains at one point (7). Borges dismissed "his Lilliputian genius, his solemn puns, his bows to archbishops and grandees, his religion of distrust, his sense of excess erudition, his honeyed veneer and deep-rooted bile."[50] Admittedly Gracián's moral

strictures are conventional enough,[51] but the grotesquely imaginative way he dramatizes them makes *The Master Critic* a marvel to read, and makes it a shame this bizarre, hypercritical novel has never been fully translated into English. Consequently, it's the odd man out in the literary tradition that includes *Robinson Crusoe, Gulliver's Travels, Candide, Emile,* and *Tarzan of the Apes*.

A century later, another rogue Jesuit published another huge novel that likewise got him in trouble with the authorities. *The History of the Famous Preacher Friar Gerund de Campazas* (*Historia del famoso predicador Fray Gerundio de Campazas, alias Zotes*, 1758) is one of the overlooked comic masterpieces of Spanish literature, and an exemplary novel of learned wit, that genre of huge, erudite novels like *Gargantua and Pantagruel*, *Tristram Shandy*, *Moby-Dick*, *St. Orpheus Breviary*, *The Recognitions*, *Bottom's Dream*, *Palinuro of Mexico*, *Life A User's Manual*, and *Darconville's Cat*, whose theme "may be seen in terms of a comic clash between the world of learning and that of human affairs."[52] Its author, José Francisco de Isla (1703–81), was disgusted by flamboyant preachers who saw themselves more as showmen than theologians, and churchgoers who attended Mass more for entertainment than edification. In a 1735 sermon, Isla condemned

> those sermons in which the orator flashes in his movements, thunders in his words, fulminates in his discourses, sparkles in his thoughts, interweaving texts with subtleties, abrupt turns of phrase and borrowed wit; making sermons in the style of an anthology where the infallible and inspired truths of Holy Writ are presented on par with the ravings and falsehoods of the Gentiles.[53]

Since preaching against this style did no good, he decided to write a comic novel that he hoped would shame it with lethal satire. Setting his novel a century earlier, when the fad was at its height—under the influence of *conceptismo* and the baroque style in general—Isla introduces us to the Zotes family (Sp. *zote*=dunce), whose son Gerund is attracted to wandering preachers as other boys are to circus performers and delights in parroting

their ludicrous spiels such as this one, tricked out with reckless Latin quotations from the Bible and context-free citations from obscure theologians:

> Fire, fire, fire! the house is on fire! *Domus mea domus orationis vocabitur*. Now, Sexton, touch the loud-sounding bells: *In cymbalis bene sonantibus*. Do it so; for to toll the dead, and to toll for fire is the same thing, as the judicious Pecenelus remarks: *Lazarus amicus noster dormit*. Water, Sirs, water! for the world is burning; *quis dabit capiti meo aquam?* the interlineal, *qui erant in hoc mundo*; Pagninus, *et mundus eum non cognovit*. But what do I see! alas, Christians, the souls of the faithful are in flames! *Fidelium animae!* and the voracious element feeds on flowing pitch; *Requiescant in pace, id est, in pice*, as Vatablus explains it. Fire of God, how it burns! *ignis a Deo illatus.* But now rejoice with me, for behold there descends the Virgin del Carmen to deliver those who have worn her holy scapularies; *scapulis suis.* Let justice be done, says Christ; Mercy defend us! says the Virgin. *Ave Maria*.[54]

Gerund doesn't have a religious bone in his body, but he is entranced by the sound and fury of such sermons, and the applause they win. His parents are impressed by his affinity for preaching and send him off at age 10 to be educated, first by a pompous Latin teacher with "slovenly taste" in writers, preferring those "who were most bombastic and unintelligible" (1.7). After studying with him for "Five years, four months, twenty days, three hours, and seven minutes" (1.10, one of many examples of Isla's Sternean playfulness), Gerund returns home, where a visiting friar describes to him the nature of the religious life:

> He told him there was no better life in the world than that of a friar, for that the dullest was always sure of his commons [room and board], and after assisting in the choir, it was all holiday; . . . Then the rout, and the racket, and the roaring, that they all make when they are by themselves! The merry mad tricks that they play with one another! . . . when their master has turned his back, or in those times of liberty and holiday which come every now and then, there are such doings are ready to bring the

> house down, playing at blind-man's buff, leap-frog, and fulling-mills, with all the glee in the world. (1.10)

Heading this call to the religious life, Gerund joins a monastery and receives further miseducation from a ridiculous pedant, "scholasticated with . . . vain sophistries" (2.1), who leaves Gerund with the impression that philosophy and logic and mere word-games. At this point, the youngster falls under the spell of a successful preacher named Friar Blas, a 33-year-old fop popular with the masses. From him Gerund learns all the tricks of the trade: how to compose a sermon by plundering lexicons and concordances for rare words and flashy phrases (emphasizing sound over sense), following ignorant flights of word-association, plagiarizing other colorful sermons, bypassing the Bible in favor of ludicrous commentaries on it, enlivening it with jokes and local references, and finally he learns how to perform this magpie melange in the pulpit like a ham actor.

Gerund eventually delivers his first sermon, which begins:

> To the auriferous age of innocence; *lavabo inter innocentes manus mea*: in uninterrupted track succeeded the argent season of defective sloth; *argentum & aurum nullius concupiri.* Yet the peccability of mortals arrived not to degree lethalic, but appropinquated to be nigrescent maculation on their pristine niveous candour; *pocula tartareo haud aderant nigrefacta veneno.* The astonished Gods, *ego dixi dii estis*, determined to obstruct the violation of established order by admonitory grace—admirably here, says the author of the Symbolic World, *ante diem cave*—and paralogized correction in preludes of castigation; *corripe eum inter te & ipsum solum*. (3.5)

Confusion now hath made his masterpiece! The rustic audience goes wild, "though not a soul of them understood a word of it," but afterwards Gerund receives a verbal smackdown by a Father Prudentio (one of Isla's personae), the first of many he receives, none of which leaves a mark on him. Gerund gives two more farcical sermons—applauded by the "broad-shouldered, tangle-locked" multitude but derided by the learned—and is on his way to a successful career when the narrator makes a shocking discovery. Writing in the 1750s, he had been relying on a collection of manuscripts and memoirs

written in the past about Gerund in Arabic, Hebrew, Persian, and Greek. Our narrator, who considers himself a scrupulous historian, hires a multilingual Moor to translate all this material for him, and it's the Moor's translation he has been relying on up to this point in Gerund's career. (If Cervantes' Cide Hamete Benengeli doesn't spring to mind, you haven't been paying attention.) But then another multilingual visitor examines the originals, compares them to the Moor's translations, and informs our author he's been swindled: the Moor made up the whole story. The narrator is crushed to learn he has wasted two years on what he thought was a documentary history, but his visitor offers a solution: "If, as your Reverence calls it an *History*, you should call it a *Novel*, in my opinion a greater thing could not have been written, nor of more entertainment or utility" (6.4).

This metafictional end-run doesn't bear close examination, for it would mean the Moorish conman shares Isla's vast erudition and opinions, and it would undermine the author's obviously sincere opposition to ridiculous preachers like Gerund by exposing his narrator's naiveté. On the other hand, it is perfectly consistent with the fun Isla has been having all along with narrative conventions, many of which will sound familiar to readers of *Tristram Shandy*. The book opens with a dedication that parodies the unctuous, high-flown style of fawning authors, followed by a lengthy, moodswinging preface that is by turns contemptuous and solicitous of the reader. About halfway through the preface, the narrator loses his temper and demands, "Then tell me now, thou bevinegared mortal of reader! (for I am weary of treating thee with urbanity) . . . ," then calms down a few pages later and entreats, "You see too, my good reader (now I begin to fondle you again and stroke your back). . . ." Isla's chapter titles are often playful and teasing: the first promises to recount Gerund's birth and early education, but doesn't; the second, "without performing the promise of the first," treats other matters; in the third, "the promise of the first is prosecuted," but the author keeps us waiting until the fourth, "In which the promise is fulfilled." Most are descriptive, but some are like the heading for 5.9, stating simply that the ensuing chapter "Is a good thing, and ought to be read." The narrator often apologizes for going off on tangents or violating the conventions of fiction, and near the end of 4.3 he freezes Friar Gerund in position for several pages as he indulges in yet another digression. He abruptly ends one chapter "to take a pinch of snuff" before resuming (4.9),

and two chapters later admits the shot of snuff made him forget what he had planned to write next—or did it? "But, besides, that very often a poor historian forgets, and, it sometimes happens, that whilst he takes a pinch of snuff, the thought which he had at the end of his pen is flown; who knows whether or not, upon this occasion, we have done it purposely, not to interrupt the thread of the narration? For our part we are determined firmly not to declare how it was, that we may leave the pleasure of guessing at it to the curious reader" (5.2).[55] And then there's the surprise ending, which exposes the whole enterprise as a cock and bull story. Isla has been called the Spanish Swift, but Quevedo or Gracián better deserves that sobriquet; Isla is the Spanish Sterne.[56]

Friar Gerund is a witty satire on the abuses of language and learning, mocking bad writers as well as the "huge mob of goosecaps" (5.7) who admire and encourage them. Although its focus is on Spanish preachers, the novel encompasses bad writers of every sort—theologians, historians, critics, translators—who use the smoke and mirrors of bombastic language and phony erudition to mask their paucity of thought. Isla doesn't oppose figurative language or erudition per se—he's a master of both—only its misuse by amateurs lacking the taste and education to use them appropriately. Just as Cervantes skewered authors of chivalric novels, Isla (who alludes to *Don Quixote* in his novel and clearly admired it) hoped to laugh these hacks out of existence. (Several times in his novel Isla acknowledges Molière's 1659 play *Les Précieuses ridicules* as a model of corrective satire.) There are a handful of educated characters in *Friar Gerund* who periodically discuss the elements of style, which allows the novel to function both as a manual of rhetoric and as an anthology of execrable examples of bad writing, which Isla obviously had fun composing. (Others were taken from real sermons of his time.)

But the Spanish religious authorities were not amused; the ridicule of preachers (no matter how well deserved) and the mockery of ignorant churchgoers didn't sit well with them, nor did statements like Gerund's defense of the flights of fancy in his sermons: "nowhere have I ever heard so many and so great lies as in the pulpit" (2.6 [2.9 in the original]). Isla was a little too complementary of pagans—citing Roman rhetoricians more often than Catholic theologians, and noting that analogues to the Ten

Commandments could be found among the Egyptians and Greeks—and a little too harsh on popular collections of sermons like the *Florilogio sacro* (1738), which Gerund plunders shamelessly. *Friar Gerund* was an instant best-seller, selling out its first edition of 1500 copies in three days, and enjoyed wider popularity in translation, but the Inquisition almost immediately began investigating it and two years later placed it on their index of prohibited books, and expelled Father Isla from Spain. (He died in Italy in extreme poverty.) It may be little known today outside of Spain, but *Friar Gerund*'s learned wit, rustic realism, and playful execution make it one of the great comic masterpieces of the early modern era.

Though *Friar Gerund* has been called "the only 18th-century [Spanish] novel of any consequence" by at least one reference book,[57] there is one more worth noting: Europe's first capital-R Romantic novel.

During the second half of the eighteenth century, there was a revolution in sensibility throughout Europe among certain individuals (it was never a mass movement), later called Romantics, who favored emotion over reason, passion over prudence, nature over civilization, the exotic over the conventional, the heroic over the ordinary, imagination over intellect, art over commerce, the individual over the community, defiance over obedience, subjectivity over objectivity, the old over the new—and in extreme cases—superstition over science, morbidity over health, and suicide over life. One such romantic is Tediato, the suicidal protagonist of José de Cadalso's (1741–82) unusual novella *Lugubrious Nights* (*Noches lúgubres*, 1771). It's a short work in dramatic form, divided into three nights: on the first, we learn from Tediato–who does most of the talking–that he has come to a burial vault on a dark, stormy night to steal the corpse of his lover, a beautiful blonde who died two months earlier. He has hired a gravedigger named Lorenzo to assist him with his dark deed, and they manage to dislodge the lid of her tomb enough to let the maggots scurry out, but fail to open it completely. Addressing his dead love, he promises to return the following night to fulfill his Poëtic plan: "I shall return to your tomb, I will take you home with me, you will rest on a bed next to mine; my body will die next to yours, adored cadaver. Expiring I will set my domicile on fire, and you and I will turn to ashes in the midst of those of the house" (55).

On the second night, while waiting for Lorenzo, Tediato is arrested in a case of mistaken identity and thrown in jail. Instead of protesting, he perversely luxuriates in the chains weighing him down and his imminent execution. Released near dawn, he returns to the cemetery and stumbles over Lorenzo's son, who unveils a tale of woe: "My grandfather died this morning. I am eight years old, and I have six brothers and sisters littler than I am. My mother has just died of childbirth. I have two brothers who are very sick with smallpox; another is in the hospital; my sister disappeared from the house yesterday" (70). Led to Lorenzo's home, Tediato advices him what to do with his ailing family: "You are a gravedigger . . . Make a very big hole . . . Bury all of them alive, and bury yourself together with them. On your gravestone I shall kill myself, and I shall die saying: Here lie several children, as happy now as they were unhappy a short while ago, and the two most miserable men in the world" (71). On the third and final night, Tediato and Lorenzo meet again outside the burial vault, but the novella ends enigmatically as Tediato tells the gravedigger, "You will contribute more to my happiness with that pick, that mattock . . . vile instruments in the eyes of others . . . venerable in mine . . . Let's go, friend, let's go" (75–76). Does he plan to commit suicide and have Lorenzo bury him? Will the two commit a double suicide like the one he planned with his "adored cadaver" (returning her to his house so that they could die together)? Or will circumstances continue to thwart his suicide, tediously prolonging his miserable life?

Throughout the novella, Tediato displays all the characteristics of what would become the romantic hero: he is tired of life (his name is derived from the Spanish word for "tedium"), alienated from his family and friends, contemptuous of society's obsession with money, filled with "an inner torment capable, by itself, of filling me with horrors" (73), sick with melancholy, and reverent of nature. (At the end of the first night, Tediato notes, "Some bells in the neighboring temples have already greeted the Creator with their morning peals. But no doubt the birds in the trees did so earlier with a more natural, more innocent, and, therefore, more worthy music" [54].)[58] Tediato resists supernaturalism, but his choice of suicide to assuage his lost love and to end his inner torment would be followed by the protagonists of other romantic novels published over the next 30 years such

as Goethe's *Werther*, Brown's *Power of Sympathy*, Foscolo's *Last Letters of Jacopo Ortis*, Chateaubriand's *René*, and Senancour's *Oberman*.

Fluent in several languages, Cadalso turned to Edward Young's long, death-haunted poem *Night Thoughts* (1742–46) for consolation (and for the name Lorenzo) after a beautiful 24-year-old actress died in his arms in 1771. Borrowing the inky trappings of the English "graveyard school" of poetry and elements from the nascent Gothic novel, Cadalso dresses his hero in black, brings him out only at night—"Welcome, night, mother of crimes, destroyer of beauty, image of the chaos from which we issue!" (58–59)—and even wanted to print his novella on black paper with yellow lettering. But more interesting than the Goth atmosphere of *Lugubrious Nights* is Caldoso's almost stream-of-consciousness rendition of Tediato's distracted thoughts, registering the self-absorption of the true Romantic, the theatricality and self-aggrandizement of the sensitive individual who assumes "the heavens also conspire against my peace" (39), and the self-pity of the broken-hearted who, as the romantic Keats put it, is "half in love with easeful death." (Caldoso himself snapped out of his depression, wrote other novels and poems, and lived an active soldier's life until dying in battle.[59]) Tediato pays more attention to his sensations of things than to the things themselves, morbidly fascinated by the way his mind works. It's an example of the inward turn the novel was taking by that time, away from the concerns of society to those of the individual.

Lugubrious Nights "became one of the most popular and influential works of fiction produced during the Enlightenment," notes one specialist of the period;[60] it is yet another example of the enormous influence Spanish novels had on those of Europe and England. Without Spain's elaborate satires (*Don Quixote, The Master Critic, Friar Gerund*), its realistic picaresques (from *Lazarillo* through *Estebanillo González*), its female protagonists and feminist rewrites (*Justina, The Disenchantments of Love*), and its experiments in historical (*The Civil Wars of Granada*) and dramatic form (*Dorotea, Lugubrious Nights*), the European novel might have taken longer to assume its modern forms. Finally, Spanish novelists contributed to the Enlightenment with their call for *desengaño*, bravely discarding the illusions that had held Spain and the rest of Europe in thrall for too long: the medieval worldview, the supremacy of religion, the superiority of

aristocrats, the inferiority of women, and other plot holes in the master narrative of Western culture—all that with the Inquisition breathing down their necks. *¡Bravo!*

GERMAN FICTION

Not until 1668 would a Teutonic *Don Quixote* appear, that is, an ür-text for German fiction that would set the tone for later novels, like that E-flat pedalpoint that germinates Wagner's *Rhinegold*. The last of the major European countries to unite, the land of Gutenberg was the last to begin contributing to the treasure-hoard of fiction, partly because of cultural resistance. "Novels were considered a corrupting, deceiving influence on the reader's morals," writes Hans Wagener in the preface to his *German Baroque Novel*. "Responsible libraries did not collect them, scholars took no notice of them, scholarly magazines refused to review them, and preachers warned against them." A few German protonovels had appeared in the 16th century, too few to warrant their own section in my previous volume, but worth a quick look before we get underway.

The earliest seems to be *Fortunatus*, published anonymously in 1509 by Johannes Heybler of Augsburg, who may also have been its author. With one foot in the Middle Ages and the other in the emerging capitalist economy of the Renaissance, *Fortunatus* is a simple but effective novel about the corrupting influence of money. The theme of fiscal responsibility is announced on the first page, where we are introduced to a rich kid who, unmindful "of how his parents had saved and increased their money," quickly blows through his inheritance.[61] He marries and settles down but remains financially insolvent; eventually his 18-year-old son Fortunatus leaves their home in Cyprus to make his fortune and has a rough time of it (including a threat of castration) until he meets the goddess of fortune in a forest in Brittany. Up to this point the novel had been roughly realistic, but it regresses to medieval folklore as Dame Fortune offers him the choice of a gift: either wisdom, riches, strength, health, beauty, or longevity. The greedy Cypriot chooses riches and is given a magic purse that will always provide wealth for him and his offspring. From then on, it's mo' money mo' problems as this nouveau riche with an unlimited credit card indulges in

conspicuous consumption and is predictably preyed upon by some, resented by others, and sucked dry by gold-diggers and false friends. As he tours 15th-century Europe—including Transylvania "where Vlad Dracul rules" (7)—he sometimes regrets not choosing wisdom over riches, but he manages to succeed well enough to return to Cyprus with purse intact. Throwing around more money, Fortunatus attracts an aristocratic bride and produces two sons, the younger of whom is given the purse for his own adventures in financial mismanagement. He also possesses a magic hat his father stole from the sultan of Egypt, which—like Siegfried's Tarnhelm in Wagner's *Twilight of the Gods*—allows him to transport himself anywhere instantly. He loses and recovers both several times during an ongoing relationship with the daughter of the king of England (the novel ranges all over the known world), but both are eventually stolen or destroyed. After he is killed by thieves and his brother dies of grief, the magic items lose their power, causing the thieves to kill each other in suspicion.

The author adapted a number of medieval folk tales to examine people's relationship to money in the emerging mercantile culture and the tensions that were rising between old money and new. With his unlimited capital, Fortunatus disrupts traditional markets by recklessly "undercutting and overpaying" (10), nearly causes a war between Egypt and Cyprus after his hostile takeover of the magic hat, and shows how the greedy rich get richer while the generous poor get poorer. A cross between medieval fable and modern business novel, *Fortunatus* is a crude but perceptive look at how money changes everything, rarely for the better.

Even cruder but more famous is *Till Eulenspiegel* (1510–11), a "picaresque demi-novel" (as translator Paul Oppenheimer calls it) about a vagabond trickster, usually attributed to Hermann Bote of Brunswick (ca. 1467–1520). It's a cradle-to-grave narrative with some evidence of dramatic organization—the author took about 40 percent of the episodes from traditional anecdotes of this 14th-century buffoon, and invented the rest—and projects a consistent moral view against dishonesty and hypocrisy, but it's essentially just a jestbook of Eulenspiegel's japes and capers. Like the medieval *Solomon and Marcolf* (see p. 241 of my previous volume), some of the jests are based on taking someone's words more seriously than intended, as in this short, typical episode:

> Eulenspiegel could not suppress his clownish nature when he arrived at Erfurt, where he soon became well known among both citizens and students. Once he went to the butchers' stalls because meat was on sale. A butcher immediately told him that he ought to get something to take home with him.
>
> Eulenspiegel said, "What should I take with me?"
>
> The Butcher said, "A roast."
>
> Eulenspiegel said, "All right." He grabbed a roast by one end and left with it.
>
> The butcher ran after him, saying, "Not like this! You've got to pay for the roast."
>
> Eulenspiegel said, "You said nothing to me about paying. You spoke instead about whether I wouldn't like to take something with me." The man had pointed out the roast so he might take it home with him. This Eulenspiegel could prove with his neighbors, who were standing nearby.
>
> The other butchers came over and—out of malice—said yes, that was true. The other butchers disliked him, for whenever customers approached them and tried to buy something, this butcher called them over to him and lured them away. So they declared absolutely that Eulenspiegel should keep the roast. While this butcher argued with them, Eulenspiegel stuck the roast under his coat and went off with it—leaving them to settle things among themselves as best they could. (chap. 59)

There's a strong scatological stink to the novel—one chapter is entitled "How Eulenspiegel Shitted in the Baths at Hanover"—disinfected for the children's versions most Germans still grow up on; in fact, "Eulenspiegel"—usually translated "Owlglass" ("glass" as in "mirror," so a "wise mirror" reflecting reality)—may have come from the Low German *ul'n Speghel*, meaning "Asswipe," as we say in low American. In his excellent introduction, Oppenheimer praises the novel's "impudent glory," its lucid view of "ordinary life in the later Middle Ages and the Renaissance," and its exposure of "human gullibility, superstitious fears, and naive frailties," but *Till Eulenspiegel*'s merry pranks aren't enough to make it an aesthetically satisfying novel.

In her *History of the German Novel*, the late Hildegard Emmel passes over these two early works and nominates Jörg Wickram (c. 1505–before

1562) as the first German novelist. Of his five novels, the most highly regarded, and the only one available in English, is *The Golden Thread* (*Der Goldfaden*, 1557). Like *Fortunatus*, this formulaic tale of a shepherd's son named Lewfried who works his way up to knighthood and marriage with a count's daughter has one foot in the Middle Ages—folk motifs, a lion who follows Lewfried around like a dog, a ghost—and one in the Renaissance, dramatizing the weakening of class distinctions and the bourgeois ambitions of 16th-century burghers. The courtly atmosphere is occasionally punctuated by realistic social criticism: "Anyone who holds an office, a charge, or a function," Lewfried's father complains, "and who tries to be fair to all, will be cheated by base and false people. . . . But should a steward be tough, severe, and businesslike, and should he claim in due time what belongs by rights to his master, everyone chides him and calls him a dog, a tyrant, and a madcap" (chap. 15). The title refers to a test of fidelity by the count's daughter: she gives Lewfried a negligible golden thread and tells him to save it until she calls for it, so he slits his chest open above the heart and sews it under his skin, and then reopens the wound in front of her when she wants it back. (She's impressed.) One unique feature of *The Golden Thread* is the presence of a female jester, the only one known to the translator during this period. When not entertaining the court, this jestrix roams "from one end of the city to the other, . . . flirting with the apprentices" (chap. 32). The novel has an antique charm, like a Renaissance madrigal—in fact a few song lyrics are included—but it can't be called great literature. How German is it? Not very, for most of the novel takes place in Portugal, for no discernible reason.

Were an English translation available, I would gush for several pages over the *Geschichtklitterung* of the Alsatian satirist Johann Fischart (1546–91), the *Finnegans Wake* of Renaissance Germany. A free adaptation of book 1 of Rabelais's *Gargantua* (1534), Fischart expanded the Frenchman's 150-page tall tale of the birth and education of a giant to three times its size in a series of expanded editions (1575, 1582, 1590). Although the novel reflects, through the funhouse mirror of farce, changing attitudes toward culture, sexuality, education, religion, gender, and class attitudes, Fischart's *Affentheurlich Naupengeheurliche Geschichtklitterung*—which one critic freely translates "Adventurous Whimsicallyvast Storyscribble"—is a carnival of linguistic subversion and innovation, a word-hoard of

onomatopoeia, multilingual puns, slang and dialect, alliteration and rhyme, etymological in-jokes, oxymorons, double entendres, neologisms, pattern poems, and paratactic word-associations, as evident from the rest of its title page:

> Of the Deeds and Councils of the—a Short Long Time Ago and Any Time—Fully and Properly Boasted Heroes and Lords Grandgousier, Gargantua and Those of the Simplethirsty, Thoroughlythirstpanting Prince Pantagruel from Thirstworlds, King in Utopia, Anyworld, Nullhold and Nowherempire, Sultan of the New Canaries, Foamlapland, Dipsoder, Thirstling and Odysseyislands: Also Grand Prince in Darkstall and New bel Mistandfogland, Hereditary Governor of Nihilburg and Underlord of Nulliby, Nulston and Nowherehome.
> Designed in French at Some Time or Other by M. François Rabelais, Now However, Metaterribly and Hilariously Poured from Above into a German Mold, Approximately as the Lousy Are Loused, More or Less Translated into Our Mother Babble. Also for This Printing Placed on the Anvil Once More, and There Buffooned, Smithied and Hammered with Such Panthirsty Mythologies or Pleasant SecretsThat Nothing Except the Iron Is Missing.[62]

Like Rabelais, Fischart mocks the conventions of scholarly works with this elaborate title page, along with a profusion of preliminaries (dedication, prologue, introduction, postface), goofy chapter titles, footnotes, erudite allusions, lists, and so forth. This fascinating farce fell out of favor in the mid-17th century, but was rediscovered by novelist Jean Paul Richter at the end of the 18th and had a huge influence on his own maximalist style: he quotes a passage from it that could come straight from one of his own eccentric novels:

> Her little cheeks bloomed with roses, and illuminated more brightly the circumfluent air with their reflection like a rainbow, like women coming out of a bath in pictures of the ancients; through her swan-white throat tube one might see the red wine slip as through a Moorish glass; she had a truly alabaster little gullet, a porphyry skin, through which all the veins appeared, like the white and black little stones in a clear little fountain;

> apple-round and sweetly hard breasts of marble, true apples of Paradise and alabaster balls, finely *decorated* near her heart and nicely *elevated*, not too high like the Swiss and Cologner, not too low like the Dutch, but like the French, etc. (*School for Aesthetics*, 102n)

Despite some intermittent critical work on him in the 19th and 20th centuries, Fischart has slipped back into obscurity—where those who dismiss him as a word-drunk feel he belongs—largely due to his dense style, which even specialists have trouble with. But some recognize him as an important link between linguistic innovators of the Renaissance like Colonna and Rabelais and modern ones like James Joyce and Germany's own Arno Schmidt. Even though the *Geschichtklitterung* has a reputation for untranslatability (despite the extracts I've quoted), I hope some myriad-minded polylinguist will give it a shot someday.

Near the end of the 17th century, the raw materials were available for a novel that could have become Germany's *Don Quixote* had there been a novelist worthy of the task. A rogue scholar named Jörg Faustus (1466–1538?), who abandoned theology for science, medicine, and the occult, attracted suspicion and wild rumors even before his mysterious death, and considerably more afterward. Devil-obsessed Martin Luther, no friend of science and learning, accused him of necromancy, and within decades a legion of nefarious anecdotes were circulating about this boastful polymath. Responding to public fascination, an anonymous author published in 1587 a short novel entitled *The History of Dr. Johann Faustus* (*Historia von D. Johann Fausten*), but unfortunately it's an artless compilation of anecdotes and heretical hearsay about the good doctor, intended primarily to warn the Protestant reader against straying from the straight and narrow. (It was brought out by a religious publishing house.) The translator of the English edition, identified only by his initials P. F. (possibly Paul Fairfax), improved it somewhat; in his superb critical edition of *The English Faust Book*, John Henry Jones writes that the translator "possessed three qualities notably lacking in the German author: a flair for pungent expression, a vivid visual imagination and a taste for ironic humour; in combination they served to exalt the humble Faust book to a work of considerable art."[63] But P. F. stuck with the religious theme; Christopher Marlowe read his translation

and immediately saw the profound implications of the Faust story, which soars for the first time in his mighty lines. It would be two centuries before a German author gave the theme the treatment it deserved, albeit also in dramatic rather than fictional form. *Weh!* as the Rhinemaidens lament.

"Now vee may perhaps to begin. Yes?"

When Germans began writing novels in earnest in the 17th century, they (like Wickram) turned their backs on local materials and looked abroad for inspiration, especially to France. This was not an inspired choice, for most French novels of that century have not aged well, and unlike them, the German novels they inspired were never translated into English and hence never achieved much recognition abroad. A few German authors picked up on the French fad for pastoral novels in the late 16th/early 17th centuries just as the fad was fading, such as the notable poet Martin Opitz's petite *Schäfferey von der Nimfen Hercinie* (The Idyll of the Nymph Hercinie, 1630), the anonymous *Amoena und Amandus* (1632), Philipp von Zesen's *Die adriatische Rosemund* (The Adriatic Rosemund, 1645)—which Emmel calls "the first original German novel since Wickram" (9)—and a later one by Johann Thomas entitled *Damon und Lisille* (1663). In France, the pastoral novel was superseded by the supersized "heroic novel," vast, multivolume works of romance and adventure set in the distant past, featuring privileged mortals dashing from one heroic exploit to the next, usually concluding with multiple weddings (see pp. 192–217 below). Again adopting the fad just as it became passé in France, such novelists as Andreas Heinrich Buchholtz (*Herkules und Valiska* (1659–60) and Heinrich Anselm von Ziegler und Kliphausen *(Die asiatische Banise*, 1689) produced huge historical romances, but not nearly as huge as Anton Ulrich von Braunschweig-Wolfenbüttel's two dinosaurs, *Die durchleuchtete Syrerin Aramena* (The Illustrious Syrian Aramena, 1669–73) and *Die römische Octavia* (The Roman Octavia, 1677–1707), weighing in at 4,000 and 7,000 pages respectively, and featuring hundreds of characters threading their way through labyrinthine plots. They were still popular in Goethe's day; his religiose "Beautiful Soul" in *Wilhelm Meister's*

Apprenticeship is especially fond of Buchholtz's *Herkules* and Anton Ulrich's *Octavia*.

The grandest example of these German Baroque novels is *Arminius und Thusnelda* (1689–90) by Daniel Caspar von Lohenstein (1635–83), a 3,000-page novel celebrating the German resistance to Roman invaders in the 1st century ad. At the same time, it is "a compilation of the views and the knowledge of the seventeenth century, be it in political, philosophical, religious, or historical matters," Wagener explains, a transhistorical roman à clef in which "the most recent history of Europe has been projected onto that of Germanic antiquity" (122, 124). With its deep erudition and encyclopedic digressions—Bakhtin complains it is "larded with disquisitions on ladies' makeup, Syrian and Chinese history, whales, diamonds and so forth" (*The Dialogic Imagination*, 96nh), as though that's a bad thing—*Arminius* sounds amazing, a worthy counterpart to France's nationalistic epic romance, Honoré d'Urfé's *Astrea* (1607–28), which may have been Lohenstein's model. But unfortunately it has never been translated into English and undoubtedly never will be. *Weh! Weh!*

The modern German novel begins with *The Adventures of Simplicius Simplicissimus* (*Der abenteuerliche Simplicissimus Teutsch*, 1668) by Hans Grimmelshausen (1622?–76). One of the greatest novels of the 17th century, this 5-part, 400-page book is a boisterous Oktoberfest of genres bumping bellies: bildungsroman, picaresque, allegory, (anti)war novel, hagiography, fantastic voyage, romance, ghost story, sermon, and utopian novel. Referring to the frontispiece depicting a leering satyr/phoenix/bird/fish creature pointing at a book, one German critic admitted "the history of literary forms stands helpless before such a Tragelaph."[64] Initially, it resembles a picaresque novel, especially Alemán's *Guzman of Alfarache,* which had been adapted into German by Aegidius Albertinus in 1615. Beginning about halfway through the Thirty Years' War (1618–48), the narrator explains how he was raised nameless and uneducated among peasants until the marauding Imperial army looted his village when he was 12 or 13; he escapes into the nearby forest and is taken under the wing of a religious hermit who names him Simplicius because of his ignorance—he's never seen a horse, and assumes soldiers riding them are a centaurlike hybrid of man and wolf—and brainwashes

him with Christianity before allowing him to read more books borrowed from the local pastor. After the hermit dies, Simplicius returns to the world at war and yo-yos from one camp to another; treated like a fool, he becomes a professional jester until he can work his way up the ranks. He becomes a marauding prankster known as the Hunter of Soest, and on one occasion discovers an abandoned treasure in a haunted house, which seems to ensure his fortune. Knowing he's betraying his Christian upbringing but powerless to resist, Simplicius then accompanies a young nobleman to Paris, where he becomes an actor and a gigolo, the beginning of a downward moral spiral that takes him back penniless to Germany, where he scrapes by as a traveling quack until he's forced back into the army. Determined to settle down, he marries a country lass (who turns into a drunk), reunites with his "father" (who tells Simplicius he is actually the son of the hermit who raised him, a Scottish nobleman who abandoned the world in disgust), travels some more (Russia and Asia) before returning home disillusioned with everything, and becomes a hermit—choosing the life that had been forced upon him as a frightened boy. So it seems the entire novel has been a sermon against unchristian behavior, and a religious call for renunciation of the sinful world.

But Grimmelshausen complicates this picaresque pilgrim's progress in many intriguing ways. On the one hand, the novel is graphically realistic, much more so than spiritually oriented works are. The attack on young Simplicius's village is described in sickening detail: the soldiers ransack and torch everything, torture the peasants, and rape the women. Later, peasants capture a soldier, cut off his nose, and force him to lick their assholes before they bury him alive in a barrel; when other soldiers capture the cleansed peasants, "They bound their hands and feet together round a fallen tree in such a way that their backsides (if you will forgive me again) were sticking up nicely in the air. Then they pulled down their trousers, took several yards of fuse, tied knots in it and ran it up and down in their arses to such effect that the blood came pouring out. The peasants screamed pitifully, but the soldiers were enjoying it and did not stop their sawing until they were through the skin and flesh and down to the bone."[65] Young Grimmelshausen was an eyewitness to such atrocities—the first third of the novel is somewhat autobiographical; his handling of a child's POV is

superb—and his willingness to report what he saw so unflinchingly makes *Simplicissimus* a primary source for historians of the Thirty Years' War. (You'll recall the Spanish *Estebanillo González* is also set during that conflict and captures some of the chaos of war, but Grimmelshausen focuses on the civilian population.)

Such language also makes the novel a primary document in the rise of realism in fiction; not since Thomas Nashe had any novelist dared to describe the aftermath of battle in such gruesome terms as he uses: "there were heads that had lost the bodies they belonged to and bodies lacking heads; some had their entrails hanging out in sickening fashion, others their skull smashed and the brain spattered over the ground; . . . there were shot-off arms with the fingers still moving, as if they wanted to get back into the fighting, . . ." (2.27). The dialogue is equally realistic: "Pox on you, brother, are you still alive?" one soldier greets another. "By the holy fuckrament, the Devil looks after his own!" (1.26). As a licensed fool, Simplicius doesn't mince words when asked to describe a fashionable visitor: "This lady has hair as yellow as baby shit and the parting is as white and as straight as if she had been hit on the scalp with a curry-comb. And her hair is in such neat rolls it looks like hollow pipes, or as if she had a pound of candles or a dozen sausages hanging down each side. And oh, look at her lovely smooth forehead, is it not more beautifully curved than a fat buttock and whiter than a dead man's skull which has been hanging out in the wind and rain for years?" (2.9). Simplicius often embarrasses himself by farting noisily; people vomit, shit, swear, scratch at lice and fleas. There's sex and some nudity: sailing on the Danube for Vienna, Simplicius "had eyes for nothing but the women who answered the calls from the boats with literal rather than verbal bare-arsed cheek" (5.3).[66] The point is religious writers don't write like this—nowhere in Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* does a farmboy tell a dairymaid "that she could kiss his arse and go fuck her mammy in the bargain" (3.23)—which calls into question the ostensibly religious orientation of the novel. Something else is afoot.

Though highly realistic, more so than most pre-20th-century novels, *Simplicissimus* is, on the other hand, highly unrealistic and brazenly supernatural. Grimmelshausen's novel often reads like a Grimms' fairy tale, for Simplicius lives in a demon-haunted world where people still cast

spells, foretell the future, and consort with devils. When he leaves the forest for the town, some citizens "thought I was a spectre, a ghost or some such phenomenon" (1.19)—phenomena as real to them as the butcher or the baker. In book 2, Simplicius is foraging at night and sneaks into a farmhouse, where he spies a few people who "had a sulphurous blue lamp on the bench by the light of which they were greasing sticks, brooms, pitchforks, stools and benches. Then, one after the other, they flew out of the window on them." Puzzled, he sits on one of the benches and instantly shoots out the window and lands about 150 miles northeast to witness a witches' dance, described with Boschean extravagance. Invited to join the dance, "I cried out loud to God, at which the whole crew vanished" (2.17). Simplicius insists this actually happened, and wasn't a dream; citing similar stories from reputable scholars, including the story of Faust, he dares the reader to disbelieve him: "if you don't believe it, you will have to think up some other way in which I went in such short time from Hersfeld or Fulda (I still don't know where I was, wandering round in the forest) to the vicinity of Magdeburg" (2.18). There he is taken into a regiment that includes a prevost-sergeant who "was a true sorcerer and black magician who knew a spell for finding out thieves and another to make not only himself as bullet-proof as steel, but others too." To find a thief, "the sorcerer muttered a few words and puppies started to jump out of people's pockets, sleeves, boots, flies and any other openings in their dress, one, two, three or more at a time" (2.22). A little later, Simplicius invents a pocket-sized instrument that enables him to hear things taking place miles away, and again taunts the reader: "However, I am not surprised if people do not believe what I have just written" (3.1). The treasure he discovers is guarded by a "ghost or wraith" (3.12), which is not a product of his imagination, nor is the demon who speaks to him from inside a man undergoing exorcism (5.2). Near the end is the greatest test of the reader's incredulity: tossing some stones into the "enchanted" Mummelsee, "a supposedly bottomless lake" (5.10)—a real lake in the Black Forest, but now known to be only 55 feet deep—some sylphs come to the surface, give him a magic jewel that enables him to breathe underwater, then take him to the center of the earth for a 16-page tour of their subterranean world and discuss their place in the Christian scheme of things.[67]

All this takes place on the "factual" plane of the novel, and doesn't include numerous instances where people are mistaken for devils, or Simplicius's allegorical dream of the military establishment as a tree (which allows Grimmelshausen to criticize further the suffering inflicting upon civilians) "with Mars, the God of War, on the top, and covering the whole of Europe with its branches" (1.18). One chapter is entitled "How Simplicius Was Dragged Down into Hell by Four Devils and Treated to Spanish Wine" (2.5), followed by "How Simplicius Went to Heaven and Was Turned into a Calf" (2.6), but these are merely pranks soldiers play on the naïve lad. Later he meets a madman who calls himself Jupiter, whom Simplicius plays along with by referring himself to Ganymede or Mercury, and layered on top of other references to classical mythology and German folklore is an elaborate set of references to Chaldean astrology. It's tempting to call this magic realism were it not closer to the aesthetics of the medieval morality play, where figures representing devils or the sun shared the same stage as mortals. Christianity is part and parcel of this magical/medieval world: throughout the novel, saints and angels are evoked in the same breath as figures from myth and folklore, supernatural events are defended with citations of similar events in the Bible, and Christian theology is indistinguishable from the world of myth and magic. If you believe in the miracles in the Bible, the novel implies, then you're no different from those who believe witches ride broomsticks and sorcerers cause puppies to magically crawl out of your pocket. As in *Don Quixote*, there is a clash between old-world and new-world weltanschauungs, and by the end of the novel, Christianity has been so thoroughly contaminated by its association with outdated mythology that Simplicius's quixotic decision to renounce the world at age 33 and become a Christian hermit can only be regarded as the act of a simpleton. The novel encourages *figurative* detachment from the world, not literal.

Grimmelshausen certainly didn't drop out to play the holy fool: he managed estates, ran several inns, was the mayor of a small town, had 10 kids, and wrote more than 20 books. He converted from Protestantism to Catholicism when younger (to help his careers, it's been suggested), but he knew the only real magic is the act of artistic creation. There's a lovely passage near the end of book 1 in which an officer's secretary praises writing as a way to make a living; Simplicius thinks he's talking about

magic (and is reminded of "Fortunatus's inexhaustible purse"), but Grimmelshausen is also praising the novelist's art of creating something from nothing:

> I once criticised him for his dirty inkwell but he replied that it was the best thing in his whole room for he could draw up out of it anything he wanted: fine gold ducats, fine clothes, in short all his possessions had been fished out of his inkwell one by one. I refused to believe that such magnificent things could be obtained from such a paltry container. He replied that it was the *spiritus paperi*, as he called the ink, that did it, and that an inkwell was called a well because you could draw up all sorts of things out of it. (1.27)

Out of Grimmelshausen's dirty inkwell came this devilishly clever satire on 17th-century society, a world "so full of foolishness that no one takes any notice or laughs at it anymore," as Simplicius notes (3.17), encouraging him to "castigate all follies and censure all vanities" (2.10). *Simplicissimus* begins like a picaresque bildungsroman but opens up into a Menippean satire, a blitzkrieg against pretension, hypocrisy, superstition, and especially the alleged nobility of war. There's no bullshit here about *dulce et decorum est pro patria mori*, a con kings and politicians have been using to recruit cannon-fodder ever since Horace penned that piece of propaganda. The Thirty Years' War was essentially a family squabble between the Hapsburgs and the Bourbons for territorial control over Europe (with some Protestant vs. Catholic window-dressing), about as noble as a mob turf war, and though Grimmelshausen sarcastically notes war is good for business (5.5), he rubs his reader's face in its barbaric nature with a force that wouldn't be felt again until the antiwar novels of the 20th century. As Simplicius fools his way through war-torn, phantasmagoric Germany, I was remind of Slothrop in *Gravity's Rainbow*; Grimmelshausen even indulges in some Pynchonesque personification: on one of his foraging expeditions, Simplicius sees "a sight for sore eyes or, rather, empty bellies: hanging up in the chimney were hams, sausages and sides of bacon. They seemed to be smiling at me, so I gave them a come-hither look, wishing they would come and join my comrades in the woods, but in vain; the hard-hearted things ignored me and stayed hanging there" (2.31). *Simplicissimus* belongs to the

same insubordinate platoon as *The Good Soldier Švejk, The Tin Drum,* and *Catch-22*.

Though Grimmelshausen drew upon personal experiences for the early parts of the novel, he drew mostly upon his extensive reading. Scholars have shown that more than 150 books went into the making of this erudite novel, ranging from classical authors and the medieval *Parzival* to the 6-page passage from Antonio de Guevara's 16th-century theological tract that concludes book 5. A German translation of Charles Sorel's iconoclastic antinovel *Francion* (see pp. 182–86 below) was a major inspiration, but Grimmelshausen also drew upon Italian novellas and German jestbooks (like *Till Eulenspiegel*), encyclopedias and almanacs, and manuals on witchcraft like Johann Wier's *De Præstigiis dæmonium* (2.8). A battle scene that sounds like an eyewitness report actually comes from a German translation of Sidney's *Arcadia* (which should give military historians pause). On one occasion, Simplicius visits a pastor and finds him "reading my *Chaste Joseph*" (3.19)—a biblical novel Grimmelshausen published in 1666, though it's only 1639 at this point! That's so obviously an anachronism that it has to be deliberate, another taunting call for the suspension of disbelief like Simplicius's magical bench ride and his sylph-escorted journey to the center of the earth. It's all one to "the old inkslinger" (2.4).

Cervantes waited 10 years to publish a sequel to *Don Quixote*, but Grimmelshausen jumped on the unexpected success of *Simplicissimus*. When the 5-book novel was reprinted in 1669, he added a 6th book simply entitled *Continuation* (*Continuatio*), though scholars are divided on whether this forms an organic whole with the previous part, or is the first of several sequels Grimmelshausen published over the next few years.

Like most hastily written sequels, the *Continuation* isn't very good. Picking up where book 5 left off, Simplicius's solitary life as a hermit seems to be driving him crazy, for first he recounts a long, allegorical dream that starts in hell with Lucifer gnashing his teeth at the declaration of peace that ended the Thirty Years' War, which morphs into a didactic tale of a rich young Englishman who ruins himself through conspicuous consumption. Our hairy hermit then encounters a statue that comes to life, and—after Simplicius decides to hit the road as a pilgrim—he gets into an argument with some toilet paper, who delivers a long economic history of its many

metamorphoses from seed to paper (a remarkable set-piece that again brings Pynchon to mind). Mistaken for the Wandering Jew, spooked by ghosts, Simplicius has further bizarre adventures as he travels to Egypt, then is shipwrecked on a deserted island off the coast of Australia, where he leads a Robinson Crusoe-type existence—this section was based on the popular English novelette by Henry Neville, *The Isle of Pines* (1668)—and there he writes the entire *Simplicissimus* novel on palm leaves. Refusing rescue by a Dutch sea captain, Simplicius intends to live out the rest of his pious life on his island hideaway, "an example of change and a mirror of the inconstancy of human life."[68] Although the book offers further displays of the author's outlandish erudition, it's too didactic, too medieval.

Grimmelshausen returns to form in *The Life of Courage* (*Die Landstörtzerin Courasche*, 1670).[69] Near the end of *Simplicissimus*, our protagonist had boasted of seducing and dumping a beatiful lady, a "man-trap" whose "easy virtue soon disgusted him" (5.6); nine months later, she leaves a baby on his doorstep, who Simplicius reluctantly makes his son and heir. Audaciously blurring the distinction between fiction and reality, Grimmelshausen states in a headnote that this unnamed woman read *Simplicissimus* and was so insulted at her portrayal therein that she decided to avenge herself by telling the story of her life, revealing that the woman he took for an aristocrat was actually a promiscuous adventuress infected with syphilis—which raises an intriguing possibility: Did Simplicius contract the disease from her? Untreated, it can cause insanity, which would explain the underwater sylphic adventure later in book 5 and the talking toilet paper. Indeed, the entire bizarre *Continuation* can be read as a neurosyphilitic hallucination. If nothing else, it stinks up the odor of sanctity with which *Simplicissimus* ends.

Just as the *Continuation* anticipates *Robinson Crusoe*, this short novel anticipates Defoe's *Moll Flanders*, but with no apology at the end for the life she's led. (Grimmelshausen, however, tacks on a homiletic warning against following her example.) Inspired by a German translation of Lopez de Úbeda's *Justina*, Grimmelshausen backtracks to the very beginning of the Thirty Years' War. Born in Bohemia, 13-year-old Libuschka disguises herself as a boy to avoid rape from invading soldiers and joins the army: "I made a great effort to get rid of all my woman's habits and acquire man's. I

took great pains to learn to swear like a trooper and drink like a fish . . . so that no one should suspect there was something I had not been endowed with at birth" (2). When it's revealed during a fight she lacks that certain something, she defiantly calls her vulva Courage, which becomes her girl-power *nom de guerre* in her fight against male prejudice as well as opposing armies.[70] Over the next dozen years, she is repeatedly married to soldiers, repeatedly raped by other other soldiers, then becomes a prostitute, then a black marketeer, doing whatever it takes to survive the war, and marrying whoever promises shelter from the storm. (Through no fault of her own, her husbands usually perish before their first anniversary.) She's smart, as courageous as her name implies, and fiercely independent; she doesn't really descend into criminal behavior until later in life, when she joins a band of Gypsies. And that child she left on Simplicius's doorstep? Not hers, but her slutty maid's. Hell hath no fury like a woman scorned, and Courage takes self-incriminating delight in telling Simplex (as she calls him) how wrong he was about everything.

Like *Simplicissimus*, *Courage* is graphically realistic but includes a few magical elements. The Spanish Justina tried to dodge sexual encounters, but Courage welcomes them: she's a novelty in novels of this period, a sexually active woman who doesn't feel guilty about scratching her itch (as puts it). While we have to remember that a man is writing this, Grimmelshausen was a worldly one and knew that women have sexual desires too, which you wouldn't guess from most novels published before the 20th century. Like Simplicius, Courage occasionally reads courtly romance novels, but only to pick up "pretty turns of phrase from" for the purposes of seduction (5; cf. *Simplicissimus* 3.18: "these books taught me how to lure the female sex"). Rebelling against the polite romance tradition, Grimmelshausen opposes his hard-core realism to their unrealistic fantasies; like his model Charles Sorel, he was out to destroy the mainstream novel, and *Courage* is an earthy and bracing alternative to most 17th-century fiction.

One of Courage's longer-term relationships was with a lackey/paramour she nicknamed Tearaway, from the time she told him, "Tear yourself away from that cart and go and fetch the dappled grey from the grazing" (16). After she dumped him for drunkenness and domestic violence, this rascal became one of Simplicius's gang during his Hunter of Soest period. He tells

his story in *Tearaway* (*Der seltzame Springinsfeld*, 1670), which begins when the young scribe Courage had hired to write down her memoir runs into Simplicius, lately returned from Australia, and his old servant Tearaway at an inn.[71] The scribe tells them what Courage dictated to him—Simplicius interrupts to admit he was also banging Courage's maid, so that baby is his son after all—and also of her life with the Gypsies. (Grimmelshausen may be the first to write about them in fiction.) We learn that Simplicius, as pious as ever, is annoyed that readers are treating his *Simplicissimus* merely as a jestbook like *Till Eulenspiegel* instead of the Christian allegory he intended. Incongruously, he is now making a living as a traveling salesman peddling an elixir that improves wine, using a magic book as part of his spiel—another occasion Grimmelshausen uses, like the dirty inkwell, for a tribute to the power of imaginative writing—and after nine chapters of metafictional scene-setting, Tearaway tells how he spent the war.

Like much of *Simplicissimus*, *Tearaway* is a grim, grunt's-eye view of war, where greed for booty trumps patriotic duty, and which brings out the worst in everyone. Tearaway admits "Soldiers are there to persecute the peasants and any that leave them in peace aren't doing their job properly," but also notes "some peasants were worse than the good soldiers themselves. They not only murder soldiers, innocent and guilty, whenever they managed to get hold of them, when they had the chance, they stole from their neighbours, even from their own friends and relations" (13). This section is sketchy, obviously worked up not from firsthand experience but from the same war chronicle Grimmelshausen used for *Courage*, Eberhard von Wassenberg's *Erneuerter Teutscher Florus* (1647). After the war is over, Tearaway marries a widow and becomes a crooked innkeeper, abandons both, then marries a hurdy-gurdy player and scrapes out a living accompanying her on the fiddle as wandering musicians. This colorful, realistic account of tramping morphs into a fairy tale in which his wife discovers a magical bird's nest that confers invisibility on its owner; Tearaway's too cowardly to use it for gain—she isn't, and winds up being burned as a witch as a result—and the tatterdemalion is still playing for pfennigs when he runs in to his old master. Simplicius tries to recall him to

Christian principles, which Tearaway initially dismisses as "a load of monkish tripe" (27), though he repents just before he dies.

"The Miraculous Bird's Nest" (*Das wunderbarliche Vogelnest*, 1672 [part 1] and 1675 [part 2]) is the title of the last two sections of what Grimmelshausen eventually called the Simplician Cycle. In part 1, a do-gooder named Michael uses the cloaking device to obstruct various misdeeds while searching for an honorable way to make money; in part 2, an unnamed merchant, less scrupulous than Michael (and more like Tearaway's wife), takes advantage of invisibility to commit various acts of greed, lust, and sorcery. The miraculous bird's nest functions as a "lens through which the bearer perceives reality" (Negus, 124), another analog for one of fiction's purposes. Simplicius's son appears in one episode in part 1, but otherwise the 2-part novel is only thematically related to the preceding novels, emphasizing once again the inconstancy of fortune, the prevalence of evil, and the consequent necessity of adhering to Christian principles. Books 1 through 8 of the Simplician Cycle depicted a world at war, but in these final two books Grimmelshausen argues that the world at peace is just as dangerous. They sound mildly entertaining, but as they've not been translated, I can only direct the interested reader elsewhere for more on the conclusion to Grimmelshausen's 10-part, 800-page meganovel.[72]

Unlike part 2 of *Don Quixote*, the second half of the Simplician Cycle isn't as impressive as the first half (i.e., *Simplicissimus*), but that doesn't prevent Grimmelshausen from occupying the same lofty position in early German literature, and his influence on later German writers is profound. He impressed Ludwig Tieck and other German Romantics, the Grimm brothers and Goethe, and his work played a patriotic part in the unification of Germany in the 19th century. Most major German novelists of the 20th century have paid tribute to him: Thomas Mann borrowed from his work for his *Felix Krull* and *Doctor Faust*, and in his introduction to a Swedish translation of *Simplicissimus*, he wrote: "It is the rarest kind of monument to life and literature, for it has survived almost three centuries and will survive many more. It is a story of the most basic kind of grandeur—gaudy, wild, raw, amusing, rollicking and ragged, boiling with life, on intimate terms with death and the devil—but in the end, contrite and fully tired of a

world wasting itself in blood, pillage and lust, but immortal in the miserable splendor of its sins."[73] Hesse greatly admired Grimmelshausen, and from him Bertolt Brecht conceived the idea for his play *Mother Courage and Her Children* (1949). Grimmelshausen's earthy, erudite, punning language was an inspirational starting point for Arno Schmidt's even more outlandish diction. I implied earlier that the young Simplicius has something in common with Oskar Matzerath in Günter Grass's *Tin Drum* (1959), and Grimmelshausen steals the show in Grass's erudite critifiction *The Meeting at Telgte* (1979), an imaginary conference of several German authors in 1647, in which Grass affectionately roasts the old inkslinger:

> In his green doublet and plumed hat he looked like something out of a storybook. . . . [After he] had offered his services in a long-winded speech well larded with tropes, Harsdörffer took Dach aside. True, he said, the fellow prates like an itinerant astrologer—he had introduced himself to the assemblage as Jupiter's favorite, whom, as they could see, Venus had punished in France—but he had wit, and was better read than his clowning might lead one to suspect. . . . His lies, said Harsdörffer, are as inspired as any romances; his eloquence reduces the very Jesuits to silence; not just the church fathers, but all the gods and their planets are at his fingertips; he is familiar with the seamy side of life, and wherever he goes, in Cologne, in Recklinghausen, in Soest, he knows his way about. . . . Hofmannswaldau stood dumbfounded; hadn't the fellow just quoted a passage from Opitz's translation of the *Arcadia*? . . . His words seemed as trustworthy as the sheen of the double row of buttons on his green doublet. (6–7)

In this novel Grimmelshausen is still in his mid-twenties, but someday, the narrator predicts, "he would let every foul smell out of the bag; a chronicler, he would bring back the long war as a word-butchery, let loose gruesome laughter, and give the [German] language license to be what it is: crude and soft-spoken, whole and stricken, here Frenchified, there melancolicky, but always drawn from the casks of life. Yes, he would write! By Jupiter, Mercury, and Apollo, he would!" (112–13).

One of the first to imitate Grimmelshausen was an Austrian musician named Johann Beer (1655–1700), whose "Simplician Observer of the World" (*Der Symplicianische Weltkucker*) appeared in installments from 1677 to 1679 and features a plaything of fortune much like Simplicius, though the novel is set on the battlefields of Venus rather than those of Mars (as Grimmelshausen would say). Already evident in this early work is Beer's "lively, exuberant, animated style—which often uses musical terms with humorous effect—a profligate, Rabelaisian heaping of words," writes Beer enthusiast James Hardin, who goes on to describe "other aspects of Beer's style and manner that recur in virtually all of his later novels: his frequent humorous use of student Latin, a macaronic mixture of German and Latin, comic neologisms, rich use of slang, the pun, dialect, coarse language, and peculiarities of speech" (29). This Rabelaisian style enlivens the only two of Beer's 20 or so novels to be translated into English so far—and the best two, according to most critics—*German Winter Nights* (*Die teutschen Winter-Nächte*, 1682) and *Summer Tales* (*Die kurtzweiligen Sommer-Täge*, 1683), a riotous diptych of social satire.

Like Grimmelshausen, Beer was influenced by Spanish picaresques but especially by Sorel's *Francion*, which begins in medias res with a bizarre situation that is partly explained shortly after, to be clarified further by other characters much later.[74] It's storytelling in reverse. *Winter Nights* concerns a wandering student named Zendorio—just escaped from his mysterious imprisonment in a castle—and the crazy events of one winter in upper Austria as he mingles with and marries into the rural nobility, a party-loving, adulterous crowd that is fond of stories and pranks. The stories they tell to while away the winter nights are often brutal or bawdy, the pranks usually loutish and unfunny, which the author narrates with great gusto even as he criticizes his "arch-gallants" for wasting their lives on such shenanigans. At the same time, he constantly pulls pranks on the reader: characters are reported dead who are actually alive; we're led to believe a bride leaves her groom at the altar, only to learn she's pretending to be his servant; a character despairs of marrying an aristocrat and settles for marrying a peasant, then discovers she's the aristocrat in disguise; a wandering tramp turns out to be a member of the nobility; a minor character in one prank becomes the major character in another story, and so on. Beer

dramatizes his dual theme of the deceptiveness of appearances and the uncertainties of fortune by filling his novel with narrative sleights-of-hand involving mistaken identities, disguises, wild coincidences, bedtricks, and unexpected revelations, all contrived with great ingenuity. It may be the most unpredictable novel I've ever read, and never have I more enjoyed having the rug pulled out from under me over and over again.

As with Grimmelshausen, there's a startling incongruity between the author's high moral purpose and his low subject matter: throughout there's foul-mouthed dialogue, leering sexual innuendo, drunkenness and indecent exposure, pranks involving feces, all of which he will piously condemn before moving on to the next raucously narrated outrage to morals. He'll let two maids curse each for half a page and describe them "tumbling so that their dresses and slips went over their heads and they quite often give us a view of their naked posteriors," then shake his head at such behavior.[75] He'll note that during a sleighride to clear their heads after drinking, his male characters "would throw a young lady over the runners and into the snow" to get a look at her netherlands: "But some of the women were clever and put on pants beneath their skirts to preclude protracted observation" (5.8). He will sometimes cut off a bawdy scene and then taunt his readers for wanting further details, especially women, whom he frequently criticizes for pretending to be outraged at indecent tales but secretly relishing them. The effect is odd, like a preacher who shows his congregation R-rated movies only to condemn them afterward.

But while influenced by Grimmelshausen and sharing some of the same models (*Francion*, German translations of Spanish picaresques, *Till Eulenspiegel* and other jestbooks), Beer self-consciously departs from the mainstream fiction of his day and defends his use of dirty realism:

> Natural affairs are not vile [a female character states]. Such stories are told so that in such situations we should look out for and protect ourselves. Earlier I read in some books a heap of high and great love stories, but those were affairs that were impossible or improbable. . . . But stories such as Monsieur Ludwig encountered in his youth happen a thousandfold and especially among our kind. Therefore, I regard the latter much more highly than the former because they can happen to us,

> and we thus have an opportunity to find in them such precepts as we can use profitably and apply to shunning our vices. (4.1)

The aforementioned Monsieur Ludwig, the worst of Zendorio's prank-loving friends, bolsters Beer's defense of fiction by insisting he learned more from reading novels than from his academic studies:

> Satirical writings and other novels enlightened me most in all matters, and I regarded them as more practical and necessary for human life than logic and all the other abstract courses, since I saw that the scholars were much less in agreement than the satirists who, to a man, found no vice good and attacked the one like the other and, on the other hand, granted balanced praise to the virtues. . . .
>
> I read through as many German texts as it was possible to get: *Hercules* and *Herculiscum* that a cleric named Buch[h]oltz in Braunschweig is said to have written [see p. 61 above]. *Arcadia, Philander von Sittenwald*, the *Alamodische Hobel-Bank*, Barcla[y]'s *Argenis*, the *Rivalry*, all the works of the ingenious Harsdörffer, *Francion, Aramena, Aerumöna*, most of the writings of Erasmus Franciscus, *Onogambo, Clelia, Simplicissimus* in which the entire German or Thirty Years' War is described, *Stratonica*, *Pastor Fido*, all the parts of *Amadis, Lisimene and Pamilie, Jan Peru, First and Second Parts*, Schweiger's travel description and many more like it, . . .
>
> In a word: If I were to cite all the works I read, this day alone would not suffice. But I acknowledge from them I obtained a better loquacity than I had from twelve months of my professor lecturing me about the structure of an oration. For I found in my readings all sorts of allusions to kings, to emperors, to princes, and to other, ordinary people. I also saw, almost as in a theater, how the world goes around and found it in fact no different from the way books described it. From this I became halfway knowledgeable and I encountered problems I could quickly solve, where others had to carefully grope their way through. And I'll readily take an oath I wouldn't have acquired such cleverness in the classroom. (4.7)

I've quoted these passages at length because they voice a defiant defense of fiction and its utility at a time when it was still regarded as a frivolous and

even dangerous pastime. Its efficacy as a moral guide is dependent on speaking bluntly about "how the world goes around," not by telling improbable stories of people leading impossibly moral lives, nor by following the antiquated rules for literary composition taught in schools at the time. Beer repeatedly goes after these, and the pedantry that attends them: he parodies several passages from a manual on the art of poetry filled with Latin phrases and ready-made clichés; reproduces the scholarly notes of a clerk preparing to writer a eulogy and the ludicrous poem that results, and near the end provides a few pages from a play exposing pedantic philosophers. And though there's a narrative arc that takes our protagonist from wandering student to landed proprietor, Zendorio zigzags all over the place in between, breaking the rules of formal composition to include whatever he wants, like a long argument on the proper terminology for musicians (after Zendorio's wife chastises him for calling them "minstrels") or Ludwig's remarkably surrealistic delirium:

> At first it seemed to me that I saw some wagons filled with numbers and hairpins traveling to the fair at Frankfurt, where they intended to walk the tightrope. After that a map wearing a coat came up and presented itself as a shoehorn. Soon afterwards I sat on a birdcage and road on it over hill and dale, often a good thousand miles in one leap. It seemed natural to me that I had to fetch a pair of freshly baked rolls for my preceptor from Tierra del Fuego. Soon there came four hundred pairs of knitted, torn, and ragged stockings; I mended them with my writing things and as compensation they honored me with an old peruke. I also saw people flying around in the air and dried cod being fished from the ground. I tore my grammar book into a thousand small pieces and then I had the snippets grilled on a spit and ate them as feathers from a turkey. . . . (4.5)

It goes on like that for another page, but that last image impudently captures Beer's attitude toward the rules of fiction.

Winter Nights ends with one of Zendorio's friends sickening of their life of "revelry and continual partying" and deciding to become a hermit to pursue the "eternal salvation" promised by Christian mythology (6.14). That's where *Summer Tales* (literally "Amusing Summer Days," 1683) picks up. For some reason, Beer renamed his characters—Zendorio is now

Wolffgang von Willenhag—but they all decide to become hermits too, which doesn't last long before they return to their old ways. Like most sequels, *Summer Tales* is inferior to its predecessor: it's a rambling account of Zendorio/Wolffgang's life over the next few decades and his souring attitude toward "the falseness of the world which is rotten to the very abyss of hell."[76] He had abandoned his earlier attempt at hermitage upon realizing "that true piety consists not in a change of place but of mind," but nevertheless becomes a hermit again toward the end of the novel, only to realize, once again, that true piety consists "not in the lonely place but one's inner disposition" (1.1, 6.10). Though not as ingenious as *Winter Nights*, the sequel is an entertaining read, especially for its realistic depiction of rural life. It's a brutal world of beatings, assaults, murder, domestic violence, a peasant uprising, and some Thirty Years' War stories, filled with characters who stink of tobacco and brandy, who complain of fleas and lice, swear at each other, suffer toothaches and sprained ankles, and are constantly on the make. Wolffgang finds some consolation in music—as in *Winter Nights*, the composer Beer includes an orchestra of musicians among the minor characters and trumpets musical metaphors—and a play is staged as pedantic as the one in the earlier novel. But even "these contrived vanities" (3.6) aren't enough to salve Wolffgang's world-weariness (or *Weltschmerz*, the Germans call it). There are a few narrative surprises and amusing pranks, and Beer's realism continues to be startlingly modern compared to most novels of the time; "The world interprets everything not as it is but as it seems," Wolffgang complains (5.4), so he tells it as it is. However, the interested reader should skip *Summer Tales* and curl up instead with *German Winter Nights*, ideally with a few bottles of Aecht Schlenkerla Rauchbier at hand.

In the closing years of the 17th century, Christian Reuter (1665–1712) satirized the state of German culture in a short novel set in the early decades of that century entitled *Schelmuffsky* (1696–97). Mocking the vogue for both travel writing and the still-popular courtly romances, it's the first-person account of a small-town schlemiel who reaches the age of 24 with nothing more than a reputation as a pea-shooting prankster, who nevertheless is convinced he is destined for great things. Embodying bourgeois pretension at its worst, he first travels to Hamburg, where he is

feted by members of high society as fatuous as he is; Schelmuffsky's calling card is the ludicrous story of his premature birth, which opens doors for him everywhere he goes:

> When the big rat which had eaten my Mother's quite new silk dress could not be killed with the broom as it ran between my sister's legs and unexpectedly got into a hole, the worthy lady falls on this account from exertion into such an illness and faint that she lies there for full twenty-four days and can, the devil take me, neither move nor turn. I, who at that time had never yet seen the world and who according to Adam Riese's arithmetic book should have been waiting concealed four full months still, became so foolish on account of the cursed rat that I could no longer remain concealed, but looked where the carpenter had left the hole and quickly crawled out to daylight on all fours. (6)

Reuter rejects literary German for this slangy account of a gull's travels throughout Europe (with a side trip to India) and mocks literary staples like romantic intrigue, piracy, and dueling. In a rushing, tumbling style, Schelmuffsky observes everything with the undiscriminating enthusiasm of a child, and with a child's predilection for gross details: he may be the first literary character who vomits his guts out from sea-sickness, wets his bed as an adult, and reels from other characters' bad breath. (He also battles body lice, but Grimmelshausen and Beer beat him to that one.) Near the end, he encounters a boastful wastrel so like himself that there's the potential for an epiphany, but with the impregnable self-confidence of a schmuck, he can't see the resemblance. By that point the reader suspects Schelmuffsky has made the whole thing up—as he accuses other travel-writers of doing in his foreword—but either way Reuter comically brings down the hammer on "burghers who attempt to rise above their own class," writes Wagener, "but also the nobility, and thus the whole outgoing Baroque culture, whose courtly character was gradually waning by the end of the seventeenth century" (83–84).

Few German novels of note appeared over the next 50 years, and unfortunately those few have not been translated. I'd love to sample one of the "gallant" novels of Christian Friedrich Hunold (1681–1722), especially his "Satirical Novel" (*Der satyrische Roman*, 1706, 1710), a wicked exposé of the Hamburg opera crowd that led to death threats. More intriguing is Germany's greatest contribution to the "robinsonade" genre, "Felsenburg Island" (*Die Insel Felsenburg*, 1731–43) by Johann Gottfried Schnabel (1692–c. 1752). That's the popular title for this 4-volume, 2,000-page novel, whose original plot-spoiling title page translates:

The Remarkable Fate of Several Sailors
in Particular of Albertus Julius
a Saxon Born
Who in his 18th year takes to ship, is shipwrecked, and is one of four to be cast upon a cruel shore, and having overcome its steeps, discovers a fair land, weds his companion, and from their marriage sires a family of more than 300 souls, cultivates his land most excellently, collects by chance of accident the most amazing treasures, and at the end of Anno Domini 1728, to the delight of friends sought out in Germany, is counted hale and hearty in his 100th year, and presumably lives yet
His story traced out by the great-grandson of his brother
Mons. Eberhard Julius
and prepared to be submitted for publication
for the presumed entertainment of curious readers
by
Gisander

Schnabel drew upon *Robinson Crusoe*, of course—it was translated into German immediately after its publication in 1719 and spawned countless imitations—but also Grimmelshausen's *Continuation* and earlier utopias to describe a land that actually operates like the Israel of the Old Testament (evoked in numerous citations and allusions), that is, where virtue is rewarded, vice punished, and all is watched over by a benevolent god—unlike the real world. After Eberhard Julius lands on Felsenburg to meet his aged relative, visitors and islanders begin exchanging stories, explaining how the original inhabitants survived on the rocky island and why others

have sought it out in recent years. Everyone who came from Europe tells dire tales of Europe in a tone as bitter as Beer's, a godless land of corruption and oppression that they were glad to leave; life on Felsenburg, on the other hand, "combines an Enlightenment emphasis on order and reason with the overt piety and sentimentality characteristic of Germany pietism," writes Janet Bertsch (113), an incongruous combo that marks this as a utopia. "Unlike Robinson Crusoe," Emmel notes, the islanders "do not wish to return to Europe and carefully protect their island from outside intrusion" (23).

With its emphasis on storytelling, Schnabel's *Wunderliche Fata einiger See-Fahrer* (to use the novel's true title) is an analog for the world of fiction, a haven from the real world. Bertsch in particular develops this view: "Schnabel places great emphasis on the socially constructive effects of storytelling. His characters tell stories to amuse and inform each other, but their stories also fill a need beyond mere entertainment. The Felsenburg's inhabitants have a voracious appetite for stories, and they display a delight in narration to the extent that it becomes a life-giving force" (126). Opposing the soul-destroying real world, life-giving stories fulfill aesthetic, not didactic, purposes. Bertsch makes this distinction: "Whereas Grimmelshausen tries to show people how to cope with the world around them—thereby affirming its value—Schnabel simply shows them how to ignore it" (131). The "entertainment" promised on the title page comes from watching a talented author create a world, not unlike the authors of the Lutheran Bible. "Why should a clever fiction, as an exercise of ingenuity, be so completely despicable and reprehensible?" asks Schnabel's fictitious editor. "If I am not mistaken, the theologians themselves believe that we meet similar examples, even whole books, in the Holy Bible" (trans. Bertsch, 115). This is an early argument for art for art's sake, not for moral edification. There's plenty of the latter in the novel—decent people living decently on their island getaway—but that's not why we read fiction. As Bertsch insists, Schnabel "justifies the existence of clever fictions because they demonstrate the writer's genius," not his probity, adding: "With this argument about the value of fiction and his description of the Bible as a book like other books, Schnabel is only a step away from the secularized worship of the literary imagination that appears in German Romanticism" (115–16).

Felsenburg Island was enormously popular in Germany in the 18th century; in a delightful radio program on the novel aired in 1956, novelist Arno Schmidt says "we have evidence that around 1750 the library of the working man usually consisted of only two books: the bible and – : our Felsenburg Island!"[77] Every German author of the late 18th century grew up with it—the young Goethe devoured it, Ludwig Tieck edited a slightly abridged version (harshly criticized by Schmidt)—but it faded after that. Few people today would agree with Schmidt that *Robinson Crusoe* is "far far more shallow" than Schnabel's novel (47), but *Felsenburg Island* deserves to be remembered nonetheless; to quote Janet Bertsch a final time, "The book is escapist, and it is this sense of escape into an alternative world, a self-sustaining world of stories, that is Schnabel's most important contribution to the development of the novel. Storytelling needs no didactic justification. The use of the imagination to generate and appreciate narrative has a value in and of itself" (132).

When a German novel was finally deemed worthy of translation into English—and not once but twice (1752, 1776)—it was a mild one. A pious man named Christian Fürchtegott Gellert (1715–69), under the influence of pious Samuel Richardson's *Pamela* (1740), composed a short novel entitled *The History of the Swedish Countess of Guildenstern* (*Das Leben der schwedischen Gräfin von G.*, 1747–48) that, according to the title page, was "Calculated to recommend an early attachment to Virtue in young ladies of no affluent fortune; also, a becoming fortitude in adversity, and a spontaneous resignation to our destiny." The prim and proper narrator is married at 16 to a military man twice her age after a short courtship and quiet ceremony; discovers he has two kids from a mistress, which doesn't faze her; learns he died in battle; four years later marries her husband's best friend; befriends the mistress who accidentally marries her brother; is surprised by the return of her first husband 10 years after his reported death (husband #2 decently steps aside), then gives a long report on what her husband had been doing those 10 years (mostly showing "fortitude in adversity," as the subtitle recommends). Gellert took pains to distance himself from romantic fiction: on her way to Sweden to be married, for example, the narrator writes: "And here, perhaps, it will be objected by novelists that I should have introduced a scene of seducing or ravishing me;

but how would this agree with the love I bear to truth were I, for method's sake, to charge an act of villainy upon any of my company?" (1:12) Richardson knew that the threat of "seducing or ravishing" was what kept his wide-eyed readers on the edge of their tuffets, but Gellert keeps it bland. When the countess's friend realizes she has unknowingly married her brother, the unflappable narrator cautions: "Were this history designed for a romance, I might easily have introduced a scene of Carolina destroying herself either by a dagger, or poison, since she had been long enough by herself to perpetrate suicide. But a theatrical desperation, and a rashness which proceeds from an afflicted but unadvised mind, have not always the same effect in common life" (1:73). True, but Gellert's avoidance of theatrical melodrama in favor of commonsense realism is at odds with his soap-operatic plot (incest! bigamy!). "The obvious discrepancy between content and world view gives the work the character of an experiment," Emmel writes charitably; "Gellert may have thought of the novel as an art form in which Weltanschuung as well as human behavior could be examined through experiment and discussion" (33). Good thought, poor execution.

While Gellert modeled his novel on English and French novels of his time, the first major German novelist of the 18th century went back to *Don Quixote* for inspiration for his first published novel. Despite a rigorously religious upbring, Christoph Martin Wieland (1733–1813) developed a healthy skepticism of conventional beliefs, which is the subtext of his delightful *Reason Triumphant over Fancy, or the Adventures of Don Sylvio de Rosalva* (*Der Sieg der Natur über die Schwärmerei, oder die Abentheuer des Don Sylvio von Rosalva*, 1764). It's the tongue-in-cheek story of a sheltered 17-year-old with a fertile imagination who believes fairy tales are true. Spotting a blue butterfly one day in the woods, Sylvio suspects it is a princess trapped in that form by a witch; this suspicion hardens into certainty when he next finds a locket containing a portrait of a beautiful girl, and convinces himself that a good fairy led him to the portrait in order to encourage him to pursue the enchanted butterfly and break the witch's spell—a parody of the causal "thinking" of the superstitious. With his Sancho Panzan servant Pedrillo, Sylvio sets out in quest of the bewitched princess and has some comical clashes with the real world, then encounters the subject of the portrait, a young widow named Felicia, who is as daffy

about poetry as Sylvio is about fairy tales. Sylvio rescues her brother Eugenio and his friend Gabriel from a kidnapping of Eugenio's girlfriend, and all convene at Felicia's mansion, which is decorated fancifully enough to convince Sylvio he has entered a fairy palace. There Gabriel tries to undo Sylvio's faith in fairy tales by telling him the most ridiculous one he can concoct, the 80-page "History of Prince Biribinker," which he claims is a lost chapter of Palaephatus's *On Unbelievable Things* (4th cent. bce).[78] Sylvio accepts it as fact because it resembles the other fairy tales he grew up on—though more erotic and scatological—but when Gabriel admits he made it all up and lectures the dreamy teen on scientific principles of empirical evidence, Sylvio finally recants. He arranges to marry Felicia, but not before taking a two-year tour of the continent, to replace the nonsense fairy tales put in his head with firsthand observations of the real world.

Wieland handles all this with great wit and élan, but the novel issues a serious warning against mistaking one's subjective outlook for an objective one, a distinction most people aren't even aware of. Just as *Don Quixote* is not an attack on chivalric novels so much as on bad writing and irrational thinking, *Don Sylvio* isn't a repudiation of fairy tales but of "the force of prejudices" and "of false reasoning."[79] The *Schwärmerei* in the German title refers to a range of attitudes from "fancy," "imagination," and "enthusiasm" to "prejudice" and "fanaticism"—that is, to believing what you want to believe (based on upbringing, social conditioning, unexamined religious and political beliefs, and wishful thinking) rather than what is objectively true. Several times the narrator interrupts his story to deliver lectures on ontology: how we know what we know. (One chapter is even titled "In Which the Author Displays His Profound Skill in the Mysteries of Ontology" [4.1].) It might seem harmless, even charming, for someone to actually believe in fairy tales—unlike Don Quixote, Don Sylvio does no harm, and his fancies enhance his life—but such subjectivity can wreak havoc in the real world, the narrator warns us:

> To understand this seeming paradox, we must remember that there are two sorts of realities, which, *in concreto*, are not so easily distinguishable as, perhaps, some may imagine.

> Now, as in spite of all the egotists in the world, there are things which exist out of ourselves, so are there, in return, others which exist only in our imagination. The former exist, though we do not know that they exist; the latter exist only so far as we imagine them to exist. These things have no reality in themselves, but with him who takes them for real they have the same effect as if they were so; and without depriving men, by this means, of a good share of that high opinion they entertain of themselves, we may assert that these matters are the mainsprings of most of the actions of mankind, that they are the fountain either of our happiness or of our misery, the source of our most detestable vices or of our most shining virtues.
>
> What fairy or enchanted palace can be more chimerical than that glorious renown which the greatest men agree to have been the aim of their most splendid enterprises? Did not Alexander . . . pursue a chimera as unreal as that which made Don Sylvio run after a blue butterfly in order to disenchant it? To any spectator, who coolly considers the actions of men, the former must appear as great a madman as the latter; at least the latter hath this advantage over the other, that his chimera injured no one, while that of Asia's conqueror laid waste half the world. (1.12)

For most of Wieland's readers, the fairy world obviously exists "only in our imagination"; Wieland encourages his readers to consider less obvious examples of beliefs that "have no reality in themselves" but that they swear by. "Wieland, in fact," writes John McCarthy, "attempts to show how everyone perceives the external world more or less prejudicially and fashions, on the basis of his own particular bias, an internal reality which can diverge radically from the external one" (60). That is, we all believe in fairies of one sort or another.

One such bias, Wieland insinuates as slyly as Cervantes did, is religion. The Spanish narrator distances himself from his story by admitting "that we ourselves have as little faith in all that Don Sylvio has been telling Pedrillo, as we have in the visions of our countrywoman, Mary d'Agreda, or the tale of the Red Cap, or any other tale with which our good nurses formerly fed us from the very cradle" (1.12). Here the narrator equates the visionary writings of a 17th-century Spanish mystic, considered "real" even today by some Catholics, with the tale of Little Red Riding Hood, and later takes

another poke at religious belief when Felicia comes across Sylvio asleep and tells her companion "if a Carmelite sister was in our place, and had found him at the foot of this rose-bush, as we have, she'd at least have taken him for a little Saint John the Baptist, unless, indeed, she supposed him a little angel" (3.9). Near the end, when Gabriel tries to break the spell fairy tales have on Sylvio, he explains that authors are as subject to egotistic delusions as anyone else:

> How should we be able to know, whether an author, who existed three thousand years ago, and whose history no less than his character is equally unknown to us, had even a wish or desire to tell us the truth? and supposing he had, might he not be a very credulous creature himself? Might he not have set himself to work upon very vile materials? and might he not have been egregiously deceived either by his own prejudices, or by false intelligence? Or, even supposing him personally clear from all this, yet may not his history, written two or three thousand years ago—what by lapse of time, or the negligence of transcribers—have been altered, interpolated, or enlarged by suppositious emendations? (6.3)

"Two or three thousand years ago" is when the Bible was written, as the erudite Wieland knew, and he couldn't be plainer on how much faith we should place in a text that has more in common with fairy tales than reliable history.

Wieland plants this seed of doubt upfront in the "Supplement of the Editor, but Through a Mistake of the Transcriber Converted into a Preface," a Cervantine explanation of how *Don Sylvio* came to be published. Allegedly written by Don Ramiro de Z***, "formerly secretary of the embassy to a celebrated Spanish minister who was in high reputation at a German court," the manuscript came to the editor/publisher in a German translation, which he and his wife found hilarious, especially the episodes featuring Pedrillo. Then a dour Jansenist gets a look at it and denounces its contents as "so many allegories or parables, the latent end and aim of which tended to nothing less than the overthrow of the faith" (vii). This reaction is offset by that of a liberal priest, who reads the manuscript at the editor's request and suggests "the author had no other design than to divert himself

and his readers," and who by ridiculing credulity and superstition "would rather be doing a service than an injury to religion, and it would be so much more unjust to blame him for taking such a liberty as the Holy Fathers themselves had made use of no other weapons than exquisite raillery and a pointed irony against the reigning superstition and idolatry of their times" (viii–ix). This is the smug attitude some educated people take toward religion, admiring its "spiritual truths" while dismissing its supernatural trappings, but either way the reader is alerted that there's more to this novel than the quixotic adventures of a silly teenager, and that there's more than one way to read a novel. Again, Wieland warns us, we should not mistake our subjective opinion with objective fact until we've done our homework. And it's certainly OK to model one's behavior on that of characters in fiction (or scripture), as long as one recognizes them as fictions. Eugenio's girlfriend, later revealed to be Sylvio's long-lost sister—Wieland knowingly exploits all the clichés of romantic fiction—is conscious of the distinction, as her addled brother is not, when during the narration of her life story she admits, "My imagination presented to me a number of adventures which I had met with in old romances, and my little vanity found itself flattered by the idea that, possibly, I too might become a heroine in romance" (5.12).

A fiction about reading fiction, *Don Sylvio* is rife with references to other fictions. *Don Quixote* is cited several times in homage, and the Spanish characters and settings are derived from Lesage's once-popular *Gil Blas* (which we'll discuss later, along with the titles mentioned below). He alludes to Shakespeare (whom he translated into German), Lucian's *True Story*, the fairy tales of Madame d'Aulnoy (especially "The White Cat"), Anthony Hamilton's *Four Facardins*, and Crébillon's *Skimmer*, a mock fairy tale more outlandish and titillating than "The History of Biribinker," which I found a little too long and labored. The novel is highly aware of itself as a fiction: the narrator frequently comments on his narrative, and after the recitation of "Biribinker" all the characters critique it and the nature of fiction for several pages. Wieland displays the same metafictional self-consciousness as Fielding and Sterne, the two novelist after Cervantes who exerted the greatest influence on *Don Sylvio*. You'll note that most of the above are comic novels, and at one point in *Don Sylvio* Wieland offers a splendid defense of this comic mode against serious nonfiction by asking

> Whether the public good, as well as booksellers' profit (which 'tis well known, is so considerable a branch of commerce in Europe), would not turn to better account if, instead of that quantity of vile productions in morality, great or small, which their tedious authors pour in upon the world under pompous titles, and which at bottom are nothing more than trite observations, lame thoughts, badly compiled and ill-digested, cold declamations, etc.—whether, I say, if instead of those we were to produce every six months some dozen books in the taste of the *Roman Comique*, the *Bachelor of Salamanca*, or the *Foundling*; nay, or even in the taste of *Candide*, *Gargantua and Pantagruel*;[80] books in which truth is spoken laughingly; books which tear off the false mask from stupidity, fanaticism, and rascality; books which exhibit mankind in their true light and just proportion, with their passions and follies about them, and without the least addition or diminution; books which remove from the actions of men that varnish wherewith they are so ingenious to cover them, while at the same time they are all the offspring of pride, private views, and a voluntary self-delusion; books, in short, which instruct and correct their readers so much the more successfully, as they seem to be intended merely for amusement; (5.1)

Novels were still held in disrepute by many at this time, especially in Germany, and *especially* comic novels—one more prejudice that Wieland hoped to dispel with *Don Sylvio*, which deserves to be included on the shelf of the greatest comic novels of the 18th century.

Though first to be published, *Don Sylvio* was not the first novel Wieland wrote. In 1760 he began writing a novel set in ancient Greece, but in 1763 took a break and knocked out *Don Sylvio* in six months, and only later finished the novel published as *The History of Agathon* (*Die Geschichte des Agathon*, 1766–67). Though longer, more serious, and more ambitious than *Don Sylvio*, this novel dramatizes the same theme—the distorting effects of *Schwärmerei*—and takes the same form, that is, an older manuscript edited by a modern German publisher. In *Don Sylvio*, Wieland took aim at the easy target of those who believe in fairy tales; in *Agathon*, he goes after bigger game: those who believe in philosophical ideals and religion.

Set in the 4th century BCE, this classic bildungsroman concerns a handsome young man named Agathon whose lofty notions of philosophy, love, politics, and virtue repeatedly clash against the realities of the mundane world. Sent by his father to the shrine at Delphi to be indoctrinated, Agathon falls under the spell of Platonic mysticism to the point where he believes he can communicate with the gods, a spell unbroken even after he learns that his priestly mentor has been tricking him in order to seduce the beautiful dreamer. There Agathon meets a young girl named Psyche, equally befuddled by religion, and both resist physical expressions of love to wander in the mazes of philosophical speculation before she is whisked away by a jealous priestess. Now about 18, Agathon goes to Athens and launches an unplanned political career, once again learning that Platonic ideals don't work in the real world. Leaving Athens in disgust, he stumbles upon a bacchanal in the woods, whose naked participants invite him to join them, but to his priggish relief they are all captured by Sicilian pirates and taken to Smyrna (in Turkey). There he is sold to a retired sophist living in luxury named Hippias, who argues that his pragmatic, hedonistic view of the world is more justifiable than Agathon's impractical idealism, which the young man still stubbornly espouses. When Agathon's spiritual notion of love doesn't melt from the heat of his dancing girls, Hippias sends Agathon to an elegant, older woman named Danae, a gorgeous hetaera with whom Agathon finds spiritual *and* sensual fulfillment. (She too falls in love for the first time.) But when Agathon learns of Danae's history, he snootily abandons her, hops a ship, and winds up in Syracuse (in Sicily) and gets involved in politics again (succeeding Plato, who failed to establish his theoretical republic there), and again sees his ideals trounced. He finally finds some equanimity at the court of Archytas of Tarentum (in Italy), a virtuous but pragmatic man. There Agathon reunites first with Psyche, who turns out to be his long-lost sister, and then with Danae, who had conveniently moved to Tarentum after he dumped her two years earlier to forget her sorrows and atone for her sensual life. Overjoyed to see one another—Agathon had already realized he was foolish to leave her—Danae agrees to be Agathon's friend but not his lover, to his disappointment, and on that ambiguous note the novel ends.

But the story doesn't unfold in linear fashion. The novel opens in medias res as Agathon stumbles upon that bacchanal, which offers a blatant

example of subjective enthusiasm. “In the intoxication in which their senses were then lost,” the maenads mistake handsome Agathon for Bacchus; his appearance gives “such a turn to their heated imagination that as they believed the god was before them, they easily supplied what was wanting to complete their idea of him” (1.2). The scene also introduces a stark contrast between Agathon’s spirituality and the world’s sensuality, the first instance of what Wieland’s English translator chides as “too alluring a picture of the most seducing, though indeed the most excusable of all human foibles”—that is, sexual allure.[81] Not until he becomes Hippias’s slave do we learn of Agathon’s background, and some plot elements—like Psyche’s story—are withheld until near the end. The novel is narrated dramatically rather than chronologically, not a great innovation—some of Shakespeare’s plays, which Wieland was translating at this time, work the same way—but different enough from most novels of the period to signal Wieland’s playful approach to the genre.

For despite the seriousness of the theme—the danger of substituting your “ideas in the place of reality” (8.6)—Wieland has fun with the conventions of fiction. First there’s the ancient-manuscript ploy: he pretends he is translating a Greek manuscript written by a contemporary of Alciphon (3rd cent. ce)—which in turn is allegedly based on Agathon’s journal—and claims “he never thought of writing a novel,” insisting that *Agathon* “is no novel, nor ought to be one” (11.1). He admits some portions are hard to believe—the chapter where pure-minded Agathon ignores “the lascivious motions” of Hippias’s dancing girls is entitled “Which May Induce Some Persons to Suspect That This History Is a Fiction” (1.40)—but the narrator maintains the pretense with tongue firmly in cheek, even pretending to envy the “romance writer” for having “the whole boundless world of possibilities displayed before him for his free use” (5.8). Addressing the material as a historian—and indeed Agathon, Hippias, Archytas, and many other characters in the novel are historical figures—the narrator criticizes the Greek author for concluding his work like a novel “with discoveries, renewal of acquaintance, lucky recovery of lost friends, and a few marriages” like an old-fashioned romance (11.1), a genre our narrator mocks yet imitates. During Agathon’s sea voyage to Smyrna, the narrator winks, “The winds, for several days, were as calm as if they had conspired

to afford us no opportunity of describing either a tempest or a shipwreck" (1.11), staples of romantic adventure novels, yet after he includes a shipwreck near the end of the novel, he tells his readers they have no reason to complain "for it is, as far as we know, the first in this history" (11.3). When Agathon recognizes Psyche near the end, the sarcastic narrator notes "what a fine opportunity this little incident gives us for pathetic descriptions and tragical scenes—What a situation!" (11.3); the chapter in which Agathon reunites with Danae is entitled "Something Which without a Spirit of Divination May Be Foreseen." *Agathon* is a critique of conventional novels even as it appropriates many of its clichés, an effort on Wieland's part to wean readers away from such predictable stuff and steer them toward the more innovative, daring novelists he alludes to throughout the novel, such as Cervantes, Hamilton, Lesage, Montesquieu, Crébillon, Mouhy, Galli de Bibiena, Fielding, Diderot, Rousseau, and Richardson.[82]

The purpose of all these allusions and metafictional asides is to remind the reader of the fictionality of fiction, which may seem obvious to us but was still a lesson to be learned by 18th-century readers, like those who wrote to Gellert to ask where they could contact his Swedish countess. Throughout *Agathon* Wieland invites the reader to participate in his fiction, both to expose the novelistic clichés they *should* be tired of by then, and to encourage them to analyze fiction on their own without waiting for the author to explain it to them. "Attentive readers," he says hopefully at one point in reference to a character's change of heart, "who have any knowledge of the human heart, will already have discovered the reasons of it in the former part of the narrative" (9.4)—that's the sort of reader he wants. Elsewhere, when Agathon visits Danae's summer home for the first time, the narrator halts at the threshold to say, "We decline giving the description of this seat that the reader may have the satisfaction of representing it to himself, as well laid out, as magnificent, and as agreeable as he pleases. All we shall say of it is that anyone whose imagination wants to be helped out must read the 16th canto of Tasso's *Jerusalem Delivered* in order to form an adequate idea of the place this Grecian Armida had chosen as the theatre of action on which she hoped to triumph over our hero" (5.4). After Agathon reenters politics in Syracuse, the narrator takes "a little pause to allow the reader time to consider what he may have to say to himself at

this instant in favour or prejudice of our hero" (9.5). When the Greek author turns novelistic near the end, the narrator steps aside: "It remains with our readers to give him what credit they please on this score; we on our parts do not concern ourselves with the matter" (11.1). Even the ambiguous ending is for the reader's benefit: "It would be an easy matter for us to explain this miraculous affair to our readers, but we leave it to them to conjecture what [Agathon] did—or to determine what he ought to have done" (11.4). These authorial interventions invite the reader to read critically rather than passively, and draw attention to the shopworn devices conventional novelists use in the hope the reader will develop a taste for unconventional novels like *Agathon*.

The English translator, smart enough to compare these authorial intrusions to those in *Tristram Shandy*, complains of all the modern references (to politics and philosophy as well as to modern novels) and wishes Wieland had confined himself to his ancient Greek setting, missing the point that Wieland is more bent on deconstructing modern Europe than reconstructing ancient history. By mocking his Greek characters' devotion to their gods, he can imply that his European contemporaries' devotion to their god is no less ludicrous simply by using the plural rather than the singular: "all the notions we had of the Gods were only the inventions of artful men, calculated to impose upon women, and upon the credulity of youth" (7.2). He can likewise criticize ancient Greek metaphysical and political beliefs still held by Europeans of his time. When his characters argue about the best form of government—and there are many such discussions in the novel—Wieland is talking more about his Germany than Agathon's Greece. (There's an autobiographical element as well: like Agathon, young Wieland went through a religious, metaphysical phase and wrote a lot of spiritual verse before wising up in his 30s, reading wider, and developing a more mature, worldly outlook.) And when he repeatedly warns readers of the dangers of subjectivity, of allowing one's personal feelings, fancies, and prejudices to blind oneself to the true nature of the empirical world, he speaks to us as much as to his 18th-century readers. Wieland was especially concerned with young readers, whom he addresses occasionally in the novel, knowing that their susceptibility to quixotic ideals (romantic/political/religious) can often lead to dangerous delusions, destructive actions, or, as in his case, to a wasted youth. Young Germans at

that time should have followed worldly *Agathon* rather than suicidal *Werther*, published a few years later.

The History of Agathon is the most sophisticated German novel of its time: it is psychologically acute, bracingly brainy, formally inventive, metafictionally aware, sensibly sensual, urbanely witty, cheerfully cynical, and engagingly profound. It's a perfect marriage of form and content, for the narrator displays the same skeptical but understanding attitude toward his material as Agathon comes to display toward the world. Predictably, this unconventional, unidealistic novel received some harsh criticism—it was banned in Zürich and Vienna—which the great critic Lessing said was because Germany wasn't ready yet for such a novel. He argued that *Agathon* "is indisputably one of the finest works of our century but seems to have been written much too early for the German reading public. In France and England it would have caused the greatest stir, the author's name would be in all the papers. But Germany? We have it, and that is enough," adding, "It is the first and only novel for the thinking person and in the classical style."[83] And a few years later, when Friedrich von Blankenburg wrote the first German study of fiction, *Versuch über den Roman* (1774), he proposed *Agathon* as an ideal model.

The influence of Sterne that Wieland's translator detected is even more pronounced in his next novel, a dazzling tour de force entitled *Socrates out of His Senses, or Dialogues of Diogenes of Sinope* (*Socrates Mainomenos, oder die Dialogen des Diogenes von Sinope*, 1770). It has the same 4th-century bce Greek setting as *Agathon*, and a similar setup: in the preface the editor explains how he came across a neglected manuscript in the library of some aggressively antiintellectual monks, a Latin translation of an Arabic translation of a Greek manuscript—again from the time of Alciphon (3rd cent. ce)—allegedly based on the journal of the famous Greek philosopher who lived in a tub, eschewed material comforts, and who pushed Socrates' preference for simple living and blunt honesty to such an extreme that Plato called him "Socrates gone mad." (The historical Diogenes left no writings behind; everything we know about him is anecdotal.) Delighted by his discovery of this manuscript, and convinced that the unconventional Diogenes has been given a bad rap by conventional-minded people over the

centuries, the editor translates the work to show that Diogenes was not an eccentric weirdo but a brilliant social critic who walked the talk.

Wieland assumed an unconventional character would probably express himself in an unconventional form, so *Diogenes* (as critics prefer to call it) is a nonlinear, Shandyesque assortment of anecdotes, digressions, and improvised lectures in 38 mostly short sections, written in a dashing style that can be best conveyed by quoting its opening paragraph:

> How it came into my head to write my adventures, my observations, my sentiments, my opinions, my dreams, my follies—your follies, and—the wisdom I learnt perhaps from both, I would first acquaint you, had I but paper, whereon to write.—But paper might be dispensed with, had we but wax table[t]s, bark of trees, or skins, or palm leaves,—and in default of these, iron plates, marble, ivory or brick might serve the turn; for all these different materials were formerly used for writing when people were more solicitous to write durably than to write much.—But unfortunately I am destitute of all these materials; and were I in possession of them, they would be useless to me, having neither pen nor type, nor any other convenient instrument except this little piece of chalk. —It is a bad business!—But what should I do if none of all these things existed in the world? The shortest way would be not to write at all: but write I will, 'tis resolved. — What! write in the sand? — It might do; I know some two or three hundred old and young writers to whom, since they are determined to write, like myself, or since perhaps they are obliged to write, I would by all means recommend this method; but after all it has its inconveniences.—Blockhead! to consider one moment on it and not to see that my tub is spacious enough to contain a whole *Iliad*, provided my hand were small enough.—I will write on my tub.—Its sides too are so naked, without sculpture, without gilding, without tapestry, without pictures; indeed too naked!—Am I an inferior artist to the worm, from whose entrails are spun those webs wherewith our modern Argonauts hang their halls?—The worm spins herself her own house, and I envy her skill; that is more than I can do. However I can hang my own house with a tapestry spun out of my brains; and that I will do, at least as long as this piece of chalk lasts.[84]

An admirer gives him a notebook as an alternative to writing his tale on a tub, which Diogenes fills with anecdotes from his life that illustrate his philosophy, written in the manner historians ascribe to him: bluntly rude, savagely witty, sarcastically parodic, unabashedly smutty, and eminently sensible. A few sections (as in *Tristram Shandy*) are only a sentence long, like this one where Diogenes breaks off his narrative apparently to masturbate, something the philosopher was known to be shameless about: "Give me leave to abandon myself to a sensation that makes me happy,—and in the mean time read once more the three foregoing sections, if you please,—and as slowly or quickly as you please.—" (10). Other sections, especially in the less playful second half of the novel, contain spirited lectures, one a stinging parody of speculative philosophy concerning the man in the moon, culminating in the 10-part section 38, Diogenes' earthy alternative to Plato's idealistic republic. Also included is the famous anecdote about Alexander the Great's visit to Diogenes, who so impressed him that he claimed, "I assure you, were I not Alexander I would be Diogenes!" (36).

Like Yorick in Sterne's *Sentimental Journey*—which *Diogenes* more closely resembles than *Tristram Shandy*—Diogenes has a weakness for the ladies that alternates between sentimental and salacious; contemptuous of conventional notions of decency and propriety, his candid (but not coarse) remarks about attractive women—whose clothes are always falling away to reveal their charms—and about sexuality in general further illustrate his preference for straight talk, though he tells one sweetly sentimental story of a girl he met when younger that still brings a tear to the 50-year-old philosopher's eye. Wieland's ongoing concern with the danger of subjectivity is cleverly dramatized in one such instance when Diogenes throws off his mantle (his only covering) to rescue a drowning woman, then (still naked) takes her behind a bush so she can dry off her clothes. This innocent, heroic action is distorted as it becomes the talk of the town, each person insisting on his or her interpretation, usually negative, based on hearsay and preconceived notions of decency rather than on observable fact.

Wieland was well acquainted with Enlightenment writers, and in *Diogenes* he joins them (especially Rousseau, whom the fictitious editor cites in his preface) in proposing a new social contract based on Diogenes' cosmopolitan individuality. He probably didn't believe anyone would sign

the contract—Diogenes is too radical, too honest for most people to emulate—but he obviously had fun venting his views in *Diogenes of Sinope*, and its freewheeling style and nonconformist ideas make it his most appealing novel. Like Swift looking back at his equally outrageous *Tale of a Tub*, "Years later the author supposedly said: 'This *Diogenes* is one of my best works. I don't know if I ever wrote anything better in prose' " (McCarthy, 95).

The lack of English translations forces me to pass over two other novels from Wieland's middle period: *Der goldene Spiegel* (1772, The Golden Mirror)—"a political novel with progressive tendencies," according to McCarthy (12)—and its sequel, *Geschichte des Philosophen Danischmend* (The Story of Danischmend the Philosopher, 1775), a utopian novel set in India. The latter sounds especially interesting because it contains humorous footnotes "attributed to a host of historical and fictional figures, among them Pliny, Epictetus, Hume, Tristram Shandy," and Pope's Martinus Scriblerus (Shookman, 106).

The only novel by Wieland honored with a modern translation is his most popular novel, *History of the Abderites* (*Geschichte der Abderiten*, serialized 1774–80). This too is set in ancient Greece—Abdera was a Thracian city proverbial for the stupidity of its citizens—and attempts to rehabilitate the reputation of the philosopher Democritus (c. 460–c. 370 bce) as Wieland did with Diogenes in the previous novel: both kindred spirits he identified with. Democritus shared Wieland's concern with the dangers of subjectivity, since perception "reveals merely how things seem to us, as opposed to how they really are," and practiced the "enlightened hedonism" that Wieland felt was the best way to live.[85] But *History of the Abderites* lacks the expressive form Wieland gave his earlier novels: it's merely an anecdotal, episodic account of the comic conflicts between intelligent, cosmopolitan Democritus and the stupid, provincial Abderites, harping upon their smug closed-mindedness, credulity, tastelessness, conformity, and antiintellectual prejudices. As Wieland's young friend Schiller sighed in his play about Joan of Arc, "With stupidity the gods themselves struggle in vain," and there's no hope here (as there was with Don Sylvio and Agathon) for improvement: like the poor, the stupid are with us always.

Wieland abandons Democritus after two sections to dramatize a visit by the playwright Euripides to Abdera, whereby Wieland expresses his views on drama, then abandons him too for an increasingly silly lawsuit between two Abderites, and concludes with a satire on religious fanaticism. But it's all too easy, just a series of potshots at stupidity and too obviously inspired by Wieland's own encounters with the stupid. In a mock "key" that he added when the serialized novel was published in book form in 1781, Wieland says of the ancient Abderites: "They still continue living and being active, although the original place where they used to live has long ago disappeared from the earth. They are an *indestructible, immortal* tribe. Without their having a firm abode anywhere, they are found *everywhere*" (305). The novel is the clearest exposition of Wieland's characteristic themes, but the least artistic. There are a few references to Sterne,[86] a few addresses to the reader, and an impressive display of Wieland's erudition, but *History of the Abderites* lacks the aesthetic ingenuity of his earlier novels. It was written in installments over a six-year period, and Wieland's creative energy seems to have been diverted to other projects—among other things, he was writing many verse-narratives at this time, culminating in the great *Oberon* (1780), which had an enormous influence on English Romantics. The novels Wieland wrote later in his career don't sound much better, with one untranslated exception.[87] But his first three fictions are great achievements that brought the German novel up to speed with its continental and English counterparts, and they deserve, like his favored Greek philosophers, to be rehabilitated.

Sterne's influence is even more obvious in *The Life and Opinions of Master Sebaldus Nothanker* (*Das Leben und die Meinungen des Herrn Magister Sebaldus Nothanker*, 1773–76) by a bookseller and publisher named Friedrich Nicolai (1733–1811). He had noticed the popularity of a charming novella by Moritz August von Thümmel (1732–1817) entitled *Wilhelmine*, which had been published in 1764. Subtitled "A Comic Poem in Prose" and reminiscent of (if not modeled after) Pope's "Rape of the Lock," it treats in mock-epic terms the marriage of a village pastor to a local girl named Wilhelmine, who has returned from four years' service as a chambermaid to

an aristocratic lady. Thümmel takes rococo delight in recounting Pastor Sebaldus's bumbling but successful marriage to the girl he had been pining for during her absence, a bouncing beauty—much is made of her exposed, heaving bosom, into whose crevice she keeps losing things—whose motives for marriage are not entirely clear, aside from being fed up with the inanity and corruption of court life. Thümmel has as much fun with epic conventions, social satire, and sexual innuendo as Pope did. Eager on the eve of his wedding to consummate his long unrequited love for Wilhelmine, Sebaldus goes to sleep: "Soon he was dreaming that his intoxicated soul was lifting itself above the sun and greeting unfamiliar regions. Then he believed he was plunging into a bottomless abyss; he screamed, struggled, bumped his restless head, and woke in a sudden fright. Thus does a merry rocket fly up into the dark in a whirlwind night, throw off friendly sparks, and races beneath the clouds; soon thereafter it sinks—is sinking now—and, ending its brief activity, explodes into a ridiculous bang" (canto 2). Sebaldus gets a glimpse of his bride's "unfamiliar regions" when she descends from a coach in her citified wedding finery: "With majestic dignity the engaging Wilhelmine now climbed down from her velvet seat and then at the same time her small, extended foot revealed itself for a few moments to the enraptured bridegroom up to the level of the silk garter, upon which in silver points was embroidered a tender verse from Voltaire. —Oh, to where does a French poet not know how to steal! Just admit it, you Germans, none of your great geniuses has risen so high" (canto 5). There is also a sobering warning for the informed individual who is tempted to oppose the uninformed masses:

> When a false, unreliable clock on the city hall controls the judgment of the citizens, it often deceives our true perception of time and its use, for here, where everyone follows a common mistake which is spread by a droning bell and pays no heed to the distant sun, what good is it to the confident astronomer that he alone is guided by its commands, and laughs at the city's delusion, and measures his hours according to nature? With all his calendars he will soon be missing his midday meal, the visit to his beloved, and the closing of the city gate. (canto 5)

Nicolai decided this worldly novella deserved a novel-length sequel.

An active promoter of Enlightenment values, Nicolai wrote *Sebaldus Nothanker* to satirize religious orthodoxy and intolerance. Noting in the preface that most novelists abandon their protagonists on their wedding day and thus neglect the more interesting story of their married lives, Nicolai's narrator—a historian who insists that, unlike Thümmel, he's writing "veritable history" rather than "a delectable romance"—begins with the difficulty sophisticated Wilhelmine has adjusting to country life and how she takes control of her marriage at the cost of "but a few caresses."[88] Starting a family (one son, two daughters) and keeping up with the latest books—sent to her from a bookseller named Hieronymus, who plays a recurring role in the novel—Wilhelmine is carried away by a patriotic treatise by Thomas Abbt entitled *Death for the Fatherland* (1761) that tried to con citizens into sacrificing their lives to the power-hungry politicians who start wars: in this case, the Seven Years' War (1756–63). At her encouragement, her 'whipped husband reluctantly delivers a sermon on the topic, with devastating results: their son goes off to join the war, and Sebaldus loses his pastorship. (Disturbed by his tolerant, ecumenical religious views, his intolerant religious superiors have been waiting for an excuse to get rid of him.) Thereafter, it's one hardship after another: the family is thrown out on the streets, Wilhelmine and one of her daughters die, the other daughter (Mariane) is forced into a deadening career as a governess/lady's companion, and Sebaldus drifts across Germany and Holland working as a tutor or proofreader. Invariably his heterodox views clash with the orthodox theologians he keeps encountering: Lutherans, Moravians, pietists, Dutch Collegiates, virtually every loony sect on the loose in Germany and the Netherlands at the time, each cult believing it alone holds the key to the "symbolical books" of the Bible. The novel alternates between Sebaldus's picaresque adventures and Mariane's romantic entanglements until a series of wild coincidences reunites them near the end (along with the missing son) and, thanks to winning a lottery, Sebaldus retires to an estate and Mariane marries a Don Sylvio-type aristocrat.

The Life and Opinions of Sebaldus Nothanker is included by literary historians with other German novels that were influenced by *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy* (1759–67), and in addition to its title Nicolai's

work does indeed share a few features with Sterne's revolutionary novel. "Every man has his hobby-horse," the narrator notes (echoing Sterne), which in Sebaldus's case is his obsession with the book of Revelations, on which he writes a huge commentary throughout the novel, convinced it foretells the history of France. Like *Tristram Shandy*, *Sebaldus Nothanker* has some scholarly footnotes and indulges in learned wit at the expense of theologians and their writings, beginning with Sebaldus himself, who, when he's not astride his hobbyhorse, is a generous, fair-minded individual (though closer to Fielding's Parson Adams than Sterne's Yorick). Listening to his straightforward sermons,

> who would suppose that this was the man of profound, recondite erudition, who had thoroughly studied all the commentaries upon the prophetical writings; who knew all the ancient and modern predictions, together with their accomplishment and non-accomplishment, to a hair; who could adjust and fit together, with the utmost nicety and ease, prototypes and antitypes; who had not passed over a single opinion of the mystics and Gnostics; who had at his fingers' ends hieroglyphics, numerical characters, prophetical weeks and cycles, the varying hours of the nychthemeron, biblical histories, and prophetical dreams, together with the whole Cabala, and the book *Raya Mehemna*; and who from these rich materials, with the aid of the Crusian philosophy (which, sharpened to a finer point than that of the finest needle, can analyze the simplest ideas, and even cleave asunder the two sides of a monad) had wove together from the Apocalypse such an ingenious web of prophecies that the irrefragable *Hypomnemata of Prophetical Theology* by Crusius, Bengel's incontrovertible *Explication of the Apocalyptic Prophecies*, Don Isaac Abarbanel's *Mashmi'a Yeshu'ah*, and Michaelis's irrefutable *Explanation of the Seventy Weeks* (whatever praise they may be entitled to on the score of truth and accuracy) certainly can not be put in competition with it for novelty, subtlety, and ingenious explanation of the most obscure images and symbols? (1.1)

A "man of profound, recondite erudition" himself—aided by his insider knowledge as a bookseller with access to publishers' catalogues (discussed at one point in the novel)—Nicolai fills his novels with erudite displays like

this, having Sterne fun with the lunatic extremes of theological exegesis. And like Tristram Shandy, Nicolai delights in digressions, ranging from extended theological disputes between Sebaldus and others to observations on the publishing business.

The latter are especially enlightening, for they indicate publishing hasn't changed a bit in two and a half centuries.[89] A fellow proofreader deflates Sebaldus's lofty notion of authorship by explaining that writers simply follow a trade, "as does a painter of tapestry or a performer on the bagpipes," and a mercenary trade at that: "The author wishes to contract with the publisher for as few sheets of manuscript as possible, against as much money as he can bargain for. The publisher, on the other hand, strives to screw his author down to a great number of alphabets[90] at the very lowest price he can bring him to accept of—and to sell his copy again to the public as dear as he can" (2.1). Hieronymus confirms this, and adds that booksellers like himself are not in the business of "the propagation of the truth," as Sebaldus naively assumes, but to make money, and that means catering to "stupid and ignorant people":

> They purchase books that correspond with their own character, that is to say, stupid ones; and these are at once the most numerous and the most voluminous. Add to this that it is much easier and commodious to write and publish for stupid people than for men of letters. [. . . A bookseller] is not at liberty to regulate his trade according to the taste of the learned, not even according to his own, but according to the taste of the gross multitude; and the multitude in return for this compliment paid to their taste, are kind enough to put it in his power to dispense altogether with the services of good writers. . . . The author looks always at the intrinsic value of his book, the publisher forms his estimate by the probable sale of the work. The former sets a price upon his writings according to the degree of applause they have met with from a few men of taste; the latter prudently considers whether there be any chance or probability that the book will attract a number of purchasers, no matter whether the buyers be learned or unlearned, wise or simple, whether they look for instruction or for amusement. (2.2)

In Holland, Sebaldus decides to translate Thomas Amory's *John Buncle* (1756)—a delightfully eccentric novel we'll discuss later in chapter 4—which gets rejected for *exactly* the same reasons publishers use today to reject worthy but noncommercial novels: "Van der Kuit failed not to start the customary difficulties, in answer to his proposals. He was, he observed, already overstocked with manuscripts; besides, business was uncommonly dead, and the price of paper and workmen's wages has most exorbitantly increased" (7.5). And when, after 30 years, Sebaldus finally finishes his own *Interpretation and Exposition of the Apocalypse*, his friend Hieronymus politely rejects it, arguing that "the authority of the Apocalypse has been rendered so strongly suspected by Oeder and Semler" (9.5).[91] Nicolai's novel ends with Sebaldus deciding to raise money for its publication by subscription. And then it will be at the mercy of the reviewers (who likewise haven't changed in 250 years), which Sebaldus's son Rambold decides to become:

> Whenever therefore the reader meets with dogmatical critiques upon a work which it is evident the reviewer himself does not comprehend—when he sees men of established reputation libeled by an anonymous scribbler—when he finds pun substituted for wit, malevolence for honest satire—. . . when he sees a laborious *word-hunter* set himself up for a *critic*—when plodding dullness affects the character of genius—when doggerel is called verse, bombast sublimity—. . . when literary talent is appreciated by popular opinion, and a book is condemned or applauded not from a reference to its intrinsic merit but from the degree of adventitious celebrity annexed to the name of the author—. . . when lastly the commonplace jargon of criticism supplies the want of judgment and discrimination—when the shadow is substituted for the substance, the echo for the essence:—in these and all similar cases, if the reader is not previously apprised of the name of the blockhead who commits such crudities to paper, he may safely set them down to Rambold's account. (9.5).

Given its sustained attacks on religious orthodoxy and footnoted pedantry, it's surprising to learn that *Sebaldus Nothanker* was "probably *the* literary

bestseller German Enlightenment" (Selwyn, 16). Then again, maybe not: Hieronymus notes that few German authors attempt (like their French and English counterparts) to appeal to both the literati *and* common readers, and Nicolai—a successful enough publisher to spot an unfilled niche when he saw one—cleverly supplied a novel that addresses both audiences. There is more than enough intellectual meat for us "bookworms"—whom the narrator addresses in a footnote (3.3)—sandwiched by enough picaresque and romantic adventures for general readers, and concludes with a happy, if overly fortuitous ending. (Amusingly enough, the Apocalyptic-minded Sebaldus wins the lottery by betting on 666.) The novel is realistic but not sordid, critical but not contemptuous of religion, and is as entertaining as it is enlightening. It's no *Tristam Shandy*, but it's more substantial than Sterne's *Sentimental Journey*. Thümmel liked what Nicolai did with his novella.[92]

What sounds like the most Shandyesque of German novels, Theodor von Hippel's "Life Histories on an Ascending Line" (*Lebensläufe nach aufsteigender Linie*, 1778–81)—in which the narrator sets out to write about his father and grandfather but winds up talking mostly about himself and wandering in mazes of digressions and reflections—was never translated into English. Nor was what critics generally consider the most successful of the many German novels influenced by Sterne, "The Life Story of Tobias Knaut the Wise, Otherwise Called the Stammerer" (*Lebensgeschichte Tobias Knauts des Weisen, sonst Stammler genannt*, 1773–76), one of many interesting-sounding novels by Johann Karl Wezel (1747–1819).[93] But Harvey Thayer, who examines it and numerous similar works in his *Laurence Sterne in Germany*, feels that *Tobias Knaut* fails to achieve the profundity of Sterne's experimental masterpiece, which brings to mind Ezra Pound's advice: one should certainly read Sterne, but "I don't recommend anyone ELSE to try to do another *Tristram Shandy*" (89).

After that Sternean digression, let's return to Wieland (who enjoyed *Tobias Knaut*). His own Psyche, the seraphic soul-mate he became engaged to at age 20 before she broke it off, was his cousin Sophie Gutermann (1731–1807). Twenty years later, by which time she was the married Sophie von

La Roche, Wieland edited and arranged to publish her first novel, *The History of Lady Sophia Sternheim* (*Die Geschichte des Fräuleins von Sternheim*, 1771), which can claim other firsts: the first German novel written by a woman, the first German epistolary novel, and the first German sentimental novel. Wieland must have published this for sentimental reasons, for it's difficult to imagine a novel more different from his satirical, intellectual ones. Its eponymous heroine is a moral "enthusiast" (like young Agathon) who epitomizes piety, modesty, chastity, and generosity, exuding a sweet sentimentality redolent of Don Sylvio's fairy princesses. A perfect child who loses her perfect parents in her teens, Sophia must stay with conniving relatives who push the country maiden into court life, hoping she will become the prince's concubine and thereby settle a lawsuit in their favor. Too innocent to grasp their motives, she reluctantly shows herself at court and attracts the attention of not only the prince but two visiting Englishmen, my lords Seymour and Derby. The former, as high-minded as she is, falls in love with Sophia but stupidly assumes she is deliberately trying to seduce the prince, and sulks in sorrow. The libertine Lord Derby, on the other hand, cunningly takes advantage of Sophia's naïveté to win her favor;[94] he tricks her into a fake marriage and whisks her away from court, but quickly tires of the "ridiculously serious" prude (97) who threw all his porn novels into the fire while he was gone. Devastated by the news that their marriage is fake, humiliated after Derby strips her naked before abandoning her, she comes under the protection of a kindly rich lady, accompanies her to England, attracts the attention of Seymour's older brother Lord Rich, then is kidnapped by Derby's henchmen and spirited off to the Scottish Highlands. Her misreported death there upsets everyone, including Derby, who unrealistically falls ill with guilt and dies; but of course our beautiful heroine is eventually reunited with Seymour, marries him after his brother Rich gallantly but sadly steps aside, and is last seen engaged in her beloved social work. All along she has been insisting true virtue consists not in being good but *doing* good, and throughout the novel she gently but firmly criticizes the rich for squandering their wealth on luxuries rather than on alleviating poverty and promoting education for *les misérables*.

Although the plot is trite and the tone treacly, the novel makes effective use of the epistolary form. La Roche was under the influence of two inspirational predecessors: Richardson's *Clarissa* and Rousseau's *Julie*; her Derby comes from the former, and Sophia's educational schemes from the latter. *Sternheim* purports to be a document assembled by Sophie's servant Rosina, who compiles all the letters and journals at her disposal for the benefit of a friend. Since they include letters by others in addition to Sophia's, they offer multiple views of key events, dramatizing the problem of subjectivity that possessed Wieland (and which undoubtedly attracted him to the novel): the characters instinctively assume their own account of an event is the correct one, always generated by what they want to believe. (Interestingly enough, only Derby—consistently associated with the devil—investigates to learn what actually happens; the good characters trust their feelings, the bad one gets the facts.) Only by synthesizing the different accounts provided by editor Rosina does the reader understand what really happened—but even then, we don't hear from *all* parties involved, which should gives us pause. But it didn't give La Roche's readers pause; they turned the novel into a best-seller in several languages and elevated Sophia into a secular saint, despite her admitted "self-love," unearned confidence—the 20-year-old rube boasts, "I have come to know what is perfect in the arts" (148)—and her dangerously quixotic notion of virtue, which the worldly Derby plans to turn to his advantage (as he explains in a letter to a fellow rake in Paris): "Thus hemmed in by the armor of her virtue and entangled in the bonds of her vanity, she will be rendered unfit for combat with me, like the knight of old, dressed in fighting panoply, who finally collapsed under its weight and was trapped in his beautiful, tight armor" (143). Seymour confesses to "a misplaced zeal for virtue" (159) and Sophia admits her "excessive sensibility" (163) creates problems for her at times, but these subtle lessons seem to have been lost on La Roche's sentimental audience. She wrote several other didactic novels after this, but none of them achieved the same success, nor have they been translated into English.

Sternheim is steeped in sadness, with sorrow and suffering portrayed as admirable qualities, signs of a sensitive soul. Sad Sophia suffers at the hands of fate and others throughout, going so far as to adopt the name Fräulein Leidens (Mrs. Suffering) after she's dumped by Derby. Seymour's sulky sadness is made to sound noble, as is that of his brother Rich. Baffled

by her attraction to Seymour, Derby asks, “I wish I knew why this healthy young girl prefers that pale, sad fellow to me with my fresh color and sprightly figure, why she would rather listen to his croaking tones than to my lively voice, and why she seeks his dead glances and avoids my speaking eye” (114). This is one of the earliest novels to make moping melancholy cool and romantic, especially the sadness that results from unrequited love. This wasn’t lost on La Roche’s young friend Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749–1832), who loved her novel. He knew the sorrows of unrequited love firsthand, having been rejected by La Roche’s daughter Maximiliane as well as by a young woman named Lotte Buff. He and La Roche also discussed the case of a young diplomat named Karl Wilhelm Jerusalem who had recently killed himself out of love for a married woman, and La Roche encouraged the young author to get the details of the story and work them up into something. It took him only six weeks to write the greatest German novel of the 18th century.

The Sorrows of Young Werther (*Die Leiden des jungen Werthers*, 1774) is one of those old-fashioned classics that reveals itself as an audacious novelty when read in historical context, for “it was more radical and disturbing than anything its public had ever known before,” as one critic notes (Swales, 13). Novelist Jane Smiley includes *Werther* among the “fallen monuments” of classic fiction (56), as many readers today probably would, still visible but no longer held in high regard. I had read it when I was Werther’s age, thought it was OK, but rereading it on the heels of Gellert, Wieland, and La Roche, I was struck by how startlingly new and different *Werther* is from its predecessors, from its lyrical style and Romantic sensibility to its psychological depth and innovative use of epistolary form. The effect on readers in the 1770s must have been explosive, like rock ’n’ roll crashing onto the easy-listening Hit Parade in the 1950s. I can see why people went crazy over it.

Shortly after completing *Werther*, Goethe described it as the story of “a young person who, endowed with profound, pure feeling and true penetration of the mind, loses himself in rhapsodic dreams, undermines himself by speculation until he finally, ravaged by the additional effect of unhappy passions and in particular by an infinite love, shoots himself in the head.”[95] It’s important to note that Goethe places Werther’s unrequited love

for the engaged (and engaging) Lotte last: it is merely the tipping point (not the principal cause) that drives this sensitive, imaginative, uncompromising man to suicide. He is not a Romeo but a Hamlet, his noble mind o'erthrown by the impossibility of reconciling his great expectations with the way of the world.

The short novel takes the form of a series of letters written by Werther, most of them to a friend named Wilhelm, during the last year and a half of his life as he slowly loses self-control and spirals downward into alienation, solipsism, and despair. The one-sidedness of the correspondence keeps us trapped inside Werther's head, experiencing his disintegration every step of the way. Near the end, the editor of these letters—who until then has contributed only a brief preface and a few footnotes, one calling Werther "unbalanced"[96]— reluctantly steps in to narrate the conclusion because Werther's elegant letters have deteriorated into undated notes and rants: a brilliant example of form following content.[97] Werther admits he is "suffering much, because I have lost what was the sole delight of my life, [not Lotte but] the holy vivifying power with which I created worlds around me" (3 November 1772), so the editor has to try to recreate his world. Like Rosina in La Roche's novel, who also intervenes from time to time, the editor reports what he has learned from others in a documentary style markedly different from Werther's rhapsodic style and from the overblown passages from Celtic poetry that Werther reads to Lotte near the end.[98] The narrator, Lotte, and her husband Albert belong to the prosaic world, Werther (and his beloved Homer) to the poetic world, and the clash of languages is instructive, for the novel is as much about language and literature as it as about love and longing, which is what *Werther* often gets reduced to, as in Massenet's opera.

From the opening pages, it is obvious something is wrong with Werther. Although he's delighted by the beautiful landscape surrounding the small town where he has gone to attend to his mother's legacy, he can't shake his guilt over a woman he recently rejected in favor of her livelier sister, but promises Wilhelm to avoid his habit of morbid introspection. "The sufferings of men would be less if they did not so busily engage their imagination—God knows why they are so constituted—in recalling the memory of bygone ills, rather than bear an indifferent present" (4 May

1771). He learned that his aunt is not the ill-tempered woman others make her out to be, and he approves of a garden that seems to have been "planned not by a scientific gardener but by an impressionable soul." Like the overture to a opera, this initial letter announces all of *Werther*'s themes and conflicts: unrequited love, the dangers of excessive introspection and imagination, the shortsightedness of public opinion, and Werther's preference for sentiment over science. In his next letter, written almost a week later, he waxes even more rhapsodic over nature but laments his inability to encompass it in art (he's an amateur painter) or language: "I am so happy, so absorbed in the sensation of a tranquil existence, that my art is suffering.[99] . . . I am often consumed with longing and think, ah! would that I could express it, would that I could breathe on to paper that which lives so warm and full within me, so that it might become the mirror of my soul . . . but it is beyond my power, and I succumb to the splendour of what lies before me" (10 May). And a few days later he tells us of his wild moodswings and one final, crucial item of self-diagnosis: "Dear friend! do I need to tell *you* who have so often borne the burden of my transition from grief to excessive joy, from gentle melancholy to devastating passion? I treat my heart like a sick child and gratify its every whim" (13 May).

Werther is a "sick child" from the moment we meet him, before he meets and falls in love with a local woman named Lotte, and before he tries to forget her by taking an administrative post in another town where, one night, he is publicly humiliated by the local aristocracy. (He uses illness metaphors throughout the novel, especially in his argument with Albert over suicide in the long, prognostic letter of 12 August 1771.) These disappointments—like Hamlet's over his mother's hasty remarriage—exacerbate a damaged soul who is already at odds with the world and with other less sensitive, better balanced people. Goethe has so effectively set up Werther's conflicted feelings within the first four pages that we don't read further to see *what* will happen—he will obviously "succumb" to the world, not triumph over it—but *how* it will happen.

It is tragic that Werther doesn't realize that though he may be a failed painter, he is one hell of a writer, able to convey the wonders of nature and the delights of love with stunning results. (The suicidal young Goethe realized this about himself, which is why he survived and his alter-ego

didn't.) Every page of his letters contains perceptive observations, telling details, lyrical descriptions of nature, or emblematic incidents he records without further comment, trusting (as only a superbly confident writer does) that they will speak for themselves. For example, his letter of 28 August 1771 concludes: "The summer is glorious and I often sit in the fruit trees in Lotte's orchard, picking pears from the highest branches with a long rod. She stands there below and receives them when I reach them down." He doesn't say another word, allowing us to marvel at what an effective symbol of their relationship that is: joined together in an activity but literally separated, Werther reaching for the heavens while Lotte remains earthbound, he perilously balanced on a limb, she safely grounded. He is attuned to the complexity of human motives: "In this world it is rarely possible to settle matters with an 'either, or' since there are as many gradations of emotion and conduct as there are stages between a hooked nosed and one that turns up" (8 August 1771). His nature writing is superb, surpassing Rousseau's, but it too registers his mental deterioration: initially he welcomes nature for pouring "the fulness of its warmth into my oft-shivering heart" (4 May 1771), but three months later he recoils from "the consuming force latent in universal Nature, that has formed nothing that has not destroyed its neighbour and itself, which saps my soul. And so I reel along in anguish, surrounded by earth and sky and all the weaving forces of Nature. I see nothing but a monster, eternally devouring, eternally chewing the cud" (18 August 1771).

And few writers capture the first, giddy effects of love as effectively as Werther does. His long letter of 16 June, recounting his first meeting with Lotte and the ball they attended that night, sparkles with telling details, like becoming so absorbed in the sound of her voice "that I often did not even hear the words by which she expressed herself." Later that evening, during a counting game in which anyone who loses count receives a slight slap, Werther receives from Lotte "two slaps on the face myself, and with secret pleasure I thought I felt that they were harder than those she gave the others."[100] Later, when he first suspects Lotte loves him back, he notes the warm wave of self-confidence that results—"Love me! How the thought exults me in my own eyes!" (13 July 1771)—and he registers the electrifying effect of trifles that few previous novelists would have noted:

> Oh! how the blood rushes through my veins when my finger accidentally touches hers, when our feet meet under the table. I draw back as from a flame, and a secret force thrusts me forward again. All my senses swim. And oh! her innocence, her pure soul, does not feel the torment which these little intimacies occasion me. When she lays her hand on mine as we converse, and moves nearer to me as she grows more interested, so that her divine breath is wafted to my lips—I feel that I am about to sink to the ground as though struck by lightning. And, Wilhelm, if I should ever dare to— but no, my heart is not so depraved! (16 July 1771)

Near the end, Werther dreams what he dare not do in waking life, and does so with a boldness of language that must have left his first readers gasping:

> Last night, I shudder to say, I held her in my arms, clasped her tightly to my bosom and covered her love-lisping lips with unending kisses. My eyes swam in the intoxication of hers. God! am I to blame that I even yet feel an ecstasy in recalling with all their fervour these glowing joys. Lotte! Lotte!—And it is all over with me! My senses are confused. For a week I have lost my powers of deliberation, my eyes have been filled with tears. I am at ease nowhere and everywhere. I desire nothing, require nothing. It is better that I should go. (17 December 1772)

Like a police raid, the editor breaks in right after that sad, prophetic line and takes control of the narrative (in the 1774 original; Goethe moved the passage to the editor's reconstructed account in the revised edition of 1787, lessening its impact). The cold shower of the editor's conventional language puts out the flames of Werther's poetic rhetoric and makes us realize what an extraordinary stylist he is, not to mention a great translator: Werther's translations of Ossian apparently improve upon the original. 'Twere to consider too curiously to consider whether Werther's inability to recognize that writing rather than painting was his true talent plays a role in his disintegration. But it's obvious that his inability to channel and control what might be called his artistic sensibility—his vivid imagination, his gift for metaphor and literary allusion, his Faustian desire to push beyond the limits of knowledge—is one reason that (like some artists) he burns out and dies young. And it's equally obvious that it is *Werther*'s wild and whirling

words, stunning even in translation, rather than its operatic plot that elevates it to great literature.

Literature in fact is a recurring topic in the bookish novel. Novels are the very first thing Werther and Lotte discuss upon meeting, as Werther reports in his 16 June letter. He is impressed by the titles she mentions (which the editor suppresses); she admits that she used to enjoy romance novels, but now prefers an author "who describes happenings such as I see around me and yet whose story I find as interesting, as sympathetic as my own existence," like Oliver Goldsmith's *Vicar of Wakefield*, among others (which the editor again suppresses, in both cases not wanting to offend living authors). Lotte means novels of bourgeois realism, and while *The Sorrows of Young Werther* is probably more arty than what she has in mind, her statements mark a shift in reader expectations for fiction that Goethe was happy to endorse. The shift in Werther's allegiance from Homer to Ossian represents a more rarefied taste of the time for literary expressions of heightened emotion and reckless heroics, works of "storm and stress," as the movement came to be called (*Storm und Drang*). Like Goethe (and Wieland before him), Werther admires Shakespeare, and on two occasion alludes to Hamlet's soliloquy on suicide. (His own letters often resembles soliloquies.) In the first instance (15 November 1772), he also quotes from the New Testament—the book he cites more often than any other—and rather shockingly ascribes his suicidal impulse to the Protestant god and begins to regard himself as a Christ figure, identifying with another imaginative, unconventional man at odds with society.[101]

The use of literature as social criticism (as opposed to self-validation) is proposed on the final page of the novel, where the editor informs us that Werther pointedly left a copy of *Emilia Galotti* open on his desk before he shot himself (a detail Goethe picked up from the report on Jerusalem's suicide). Lessing's 1772 play concerns a sensitive bourgeois woman who so fears the corrupting influence of court life that she begs her father to kill her so that she can retain her values, implying that it is the fault of a flawed society for driving some of its members to suicide, not the fault of a flawed individual. This, like Werther's assumption his god wants to sacrifice him as he did his only begotten son, is an evasion of responsibility for his own oversensitivity—the "heart" he indulges like "a sick child"—but the novel

does launch a series of attacks against the duller members of society. A content but unimaginative peasant woman has "no other thought, when she sees the leaves falling, but that winter is near" (27 May 1771), whereas for Werther, "As Nature turns to autumn, it becomes autumn within me and around me. My leaves are sear and yellow, and the trees near by have already lost their leaves" (4 September 1772 [1787 version]). Werther mocks his petty-minded boss and especially the "loathsome people" he meets at court, disgusted at "[t]heir love of rank, the way they keep watch and guard to steel the smallest march upon each other, their most wretched and pitiable passions which they make no attempt to conceal" (24 December 1771). "It is a mass of congreve-rockets," Goethe said of *Werther* later in life,[102] referring to the kinds of rockets used in warfare, not in entertainments.

Like Hamlet, Werther recognizes the time is out of joint, but lacks the capacity to set it right; he more closely resembles David Foster Wallace, whose intellectual powers were not enough to overcome neurological malfunctioning.[103] Goethe's great achievement is his revealing portrait of a character type fairly new to fiction: someone who is smart, cultured, and sensitive, but also depressed, damaged, and self-destructive. A few of these traits can be glimpsed in Des Grieux in Prévost's *Manon Lescault*, Tediato in Cadalso's *Lugubrious Nights*, and in La Roche's moping characters, but not all of them together. Healthier, better-adjusted people (and critics) deride people like Werther, calling them self-pitying crybabies, enfeebled pansies lacking willpower. (The same people make the same complaints against Hamlet, and against sensitive types in general.) But Werther is more fully alive than any character in the novel, closer to what we all should be—which is why Frankenstein's monster reads *Werther*, to learn "what it is to be a fucking *human being*," as Wallace famously said (Burn, 26). His failure to control, channel, or repress that surging vitality is grounds for pity, not scorn. Werther spoke to similar souls in Goethe's time, who donned Werther-wear (blue coat and yellow vest—Jerusalem's outfit) and, in extreme cases it's been rumored, copycatted his suicide. But he also created a new breed of literary hero whose offspring are as various as Marianne Dashwood, Childe Harold, Frankenstein's monster, Madame Bovary, Bartleby the scrivener, Quentin Compson, Lowry's consul, Wyatt

Gwyon, Alaric Darconville, and Maso's American woman in the Chinese hat.[104] For a "fallen monument," *The Sorrows of Young Werther* casts an awful long shadow.

Like Wieland, the polymath Goethe wrote in a variety of genres (and occupied himself with a number of nonliterary concerns), so consequently he didn't publish another novel until 1795. Encouraged by his close friend Schiller, Goethe returned to a novel he had worked on intermittently between 1776 and 1786 called *Wilhelm Meister's Theatrical Calling*, about a young man who abandons the family business to pursue a life on the stage, hoping to establish a German national theater (even though Germany wasn't yet a nation).[105] When Goethe resumed work on it in the early 1790s, he retitled it *Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship* (*Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre*, 1795–96) and turned Wilhelm's theatrical experience into a prolonged detour on the way to self-actualization. Theater life dominates the first half of the novel—a wonderful depiction of the bohemian lives of actors, backstage machinations, touring, and plenty of discussions of the nature of drama, Shakespeare's in particular—but during the second half Wilhelm comes to realize he's not cut out for the theater and learns that, since his youth, he has been under observation by the mysterious Society of the Tower, a Freemason-like lodge that grooms promising individuals for a higher life, which Wilhelm is poised for at the end of the novel as he prepares to marry into nobility and go on a journey.

Look up *Bildungsroman* in any handbook of literary terms and *Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship* is the first novel mentioned; in fact, the German critic who came up with that term, Karl Morgenstern, did so in reference to Goethe's novel. Though sometimes used for any coming-of-age novel, bildungsroman was originally intended to identify those novels in which a young protagonist deliberately tries to cultivate an informed sensibility, self-consciously following a path of self-fulfillment, often via academic discussion and study. (For example, Wieland's *Don Sylvio* is not a bildungsroman because the protagonist merely outgrows a silly obsession, whereas *Agathon* is one because the protagonist obsesses over the best way to conduct his life, and recalculates his convictions as he matures.) Although the *Apprenticeship* contains elements of the picaresque and exploits some melodramatic staples of the conventional novel (the

Trivialroman, as it's aptly called in German), it is largely concerned with Wilhelm's certainty that Fate holds something greater for him than toiling in his father's business, and with his attempt to discover what that something is. That's his first mistake: there's no such thing as Fate or Providence, as a mysterious stranger (a representative of the Society of the Tower) tells him early on: "The texture of this world is made up of necessity and chance. Human reason holds the balance between them, treating necessity as the basis of existence, but manipulating and directing chance, and using it. . . . I can be really happy only with a person who knows what is useful to him and others, and works at controlling his own arbitrariness. Everyone holds his fortune in his own hands, like a sculptor the raw material he will fashion into a figure."[106] But this is lost on young Wilhelm, who is too eager to pursue the roar of greasepaint, the smell of the crowd.

After that meeting, Wilhelm is distracted by some music into visiting his mistress, an actress named Mariane, and the first of a half-dozen fascinating women he chances to meet over the course of the novel. Wilhelm's theatrical dreams are predictably deflated—he learns an actor has to put up with "the jealousy of colleagues, the favoritism of managers, and the fickleness of the public" (1.14), and he complains he never hears actors "discussing the poetic merit of a play or criticizing it (rightly or wrongly). All they talked about was: 'How much will it make? Will it be a hit? How long will it run?' " (1.15)—but the women he encounters are unpredictable and often the main attraction of the work. Goethe casts his novel with female roles that were ignored or disparaged in other novels of the time. The aforementioned Mariane is an actress having an affair with both Wilhelm and a rich admirer with nary a word of disapproval from the open-minded narrator, who notes only that she's untidy. (Order, rather than conventional morality, is more important.) Wilhelm mistrusts her genuine fidelity and leaves her (and unknowingly leaves her pregnant), and then meets the strangest creature in the novel, the mysterious Mignon, an androgynous 12- or 13-year-old who performs in an acrobat troupe, speaks broken German, and becomes Wilhelm's "slave." He is touched by the sad songs she sings—some of Goethe's most famous lyrics—but he never knows what to make of her, remains oblivious of her love for him, and

watches her die three or four years later dressed as an angel.[107] He's equally ambivalent about one of the great flirts of literature, a roguish actress named Philine, who thinks nothing of kissing him on the mouth at a picnic a day after meeting him, and who charms her way through various scrapes in the novel. ("And if I love you," she laughs in Wilhelm's face, "what's that to you?" [4.9].) Nor does he know what to make of a sardonic, histrionic actress named Aurelie, whose "theatrical display of passion" scares him, especially after she slashes his hand with a dagger so that he won't forget his promise never to deceive a woman (4.20). She plays Ophelia to his Hamlet in a much-discussed production, and later this "unhappy and wrought-up" woman dies after a triumphant performance as the deceived mistress in Lessing's *Emilia Galotti*, the same play Werther left as a symbolic suicide note. Then there's Melina, the wife of a theater manager, who refers "rather crudely to Wilhelm's 'pedantic' ideals, his presumptuous claims of educating the public" (5.16). The aristocratic women Wilhelm later meets and becomes engaged to (first one, then another) are smart, competent, and orderly. All of these female characters are intriguing individuals, and each teaches Wilhelm something during his apprenticeship to master "the greatest of all arts," in Carlyle view, "the art of life" (xi).

Even though Wilhelm realizes his theatrical calling was a wrong number, his growing understanding of drama and the other arts plays a crucial role in his maturation. As he progresses from the puppet shows of his youth to commercial theater to the life-changing discovery of Shakespeare, he finds in drama the order and form lacking in life. The *Apprenticeship* is as much critifiction as bildungsroman, for the novel is filled with discussions about aesthetics, about the purposes of (and differences between) plays and novels, and the proper way to regard works of art. As a boy, Wilhelm (like most people) valued only the subject matter, not the artistry, of a work, as he admits to the mysterious stranger, who criticizes a particular painting owned by Wilhelm's grandfather (and which his business-minded father sold off):

> "It wasn't exactly the best painting in the collection: the composition was not good, the colors were nothing special, and the execution was

mannered."

"I didn't understand that [Wilhelm replies], and still don't understand it: The subject is what appeals to me in a painting, not the artistry."

"Your grandfather seemed to think otherwise, for the major part of his collection consisted of excellent things in which one always admired the merits of the painter without reference to the subject. And that particular picture was hanging in the anteroom to show that he did not value it highly. . . . But if the paintings had remained in your home, you would probably have developed more understanding for the works themselves, instead of always putting yourself and your feelings into them." (1.17).

Studying Shakespeare helps Wilhelm to admire the merits of a play without reference to the subject matter—though he still wants to play Hamlet because he can relate to him—so the next step is to apply those insights to life, as Aurelie urges:

"I admire your profound insights into literature, especially dramatic literature. You are able to penetrate to the very depths of what was in the poet's mind and to appreciate the subtlest nuances in its presentation. . . . It seems as if some presentiment of the whole world lies within you, and this is brought to life and developed by your contact with poetry. For truly," she went on, "nothing comes into you from the outside world. I have rarely met anyone who knew so little of the people with whom he lives—indeed fundamentally misjudges them. Let me say this: when I hear you explaining Shakespeare, it seems as if you have just come from a council of the gods and heard them discussing how to make humans; but when you are associating with real people, you seem like some first child of creation growing up to gape at lions and monkeys, sheep and elephants in strange astonishment and good-natured devotion, treating them affably as your equals, simply because they live and move." (4.16)

Near the end, the mysterious stranger—finally revealed to be a member of the Society called the Abbé—brings Wilhelm to his grandfather's art collection to reevaluate that favorite painting of his youth, and tells him: "People tend to believe that the faculty of appreciating art develops as naturally as the tongue or the palate, and they judge a work of art as they do

food. They do not understand that a different kind of culture is required to attain a true appreciation of art" (8.7). Moreover, the aesthetic distance required for an appreciation of the merits of a work of art—that is, for its form as opposed to its content—is analogous to insight required to perceive the form of a fully developed self, as the Abbé argues: "But because most people are themselves without form, since they cannot give a shape to their own self, their personality, they labor away at depriving [art] objects of their form, so that everything shall become the same loose and flabby substances as themselves" (8.7). Society offers a number of prefabricated forms for those too lazy or unwilling to find their own form—for Wilhelm, it was to become a businessman like his father—and *Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship* is both the story of an individual finding his own form and an instruction manual for readers who want to "give a shape to their own self." Does Wilhelm succeed? You'll have to read the sequel Goethe published 30 years later, *Wilhelm Meister's Journeyman Years*.[108]

With its unconventional characters, relaxed realism, and smooth synthesis of pop fiction and aesthetic treatise, *Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship* was a triumphant success, and established the mode that would be followed by the great novelists of the 19th century. (The works of Dickens, Eliot, Stendhal, et al., have more in common with this novel than with those of Richardson, Fielding, Diderot, and other great novelists of the 18th century.) Goethe makes full use of the advantages a novel has over a play—the subject of a discussion between Wilhelm and his director (5.7)—namely, its slower pace, the privileging of sentiments over action (as they put it), and its elastic form. It's not flawless: that same elasticity encouraged Goethe to devote the entire book 6 to a novella called *Confessions of a Beautiful Soul*, a tedious tale of religious mania of only tangential relevance to the rest of the novel, mainly as an outdated sacred version of Wilhelm's secular quest. (Talk about your prefabricated forms for living! *Confessions* is reminiscent of La Roche's pietist novel, though nobody is stripped.) Also, the narrator too often makes redundant observations like "And every day he was expanding the range of his ideas which had for so long been limited to a very narrow sphere" (4.17), too reminiscent of the lowbrow *Erziehungsroman* (educational novel) that enjoyed a fad at that time.[109] While the *Apprenticeship* has never been as popular as the more sensational *Werther*,

it's a more mature work, and (for those who look for them) it sends a more mature message: "*Remember to live*" (8.5).

Like Nicolai's *Sebaldus Nothanker*, *Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship* is set during the Seven Years' War. In 1794, Goethe interrupted work on it to address the French Revolution in a short novel entitled *Conversations of German Refugees* (*Die Unterhaltungen deutscher Ausgewanderten*, 1794–95), an ingenious fiction about the socializing effects of ingenious fiction. In the fall of 1792, an aristocratic German family is forced to leave its home west of the Rhine for a smaller one on the east side of the river, driven there by invading French soldiers (responding to German threats of invasion if they harmed the French royal family). Naturally distraught, a few of them snap at each other, for, as the Baroness remarks, "times of general confusion and distress showed more clearly than any other how badly brought-up most people are" (17). Self-control and renunciation, she argues, are even more important in times of stress than in normal times. The Abbé, a friend of the family, agrees and suggests they tell stories to calm down, which recalls the frame of Boccaccio's *Decameron*, a similar case of opposing disorder with fiction (though the Renaissance story-cycle Goethe had in mind was the 15th-century French collection *Cent Nouvelles nouvelles*, one of whose stories the Abbé retells).

As though recapitulating the history of narrative, the Abbé begins with simple, true-life anecdotes and concludes with a complex, allegorical fairy tale. The early stories mix the supernatural with elements of illicit sex—lowbrow entertainment—but as they progress, the stories become more literary and dramatize the benefits of self-control and renunciation, lessons that the distressed refugees gradually realize apply to themselves. Like the *Apprenticeship*, *Conversations* is a critifiction due to its many discussions of fiction: each story is critiqued by the listeners, who also discuss their literary likes and dislikes. The Abbé narrates most of these stories off the top of his head—the Baroness's hotheaded son Karl narrates (poorly) two others—but he asks for extra time to prepare the final story after Karl requests a fairy tale, which the Abbé cannily crafts specifically for his audience.

The 20-page *Märchen* that concludes the 90-page novella is too complex to summarize, but what emerges from this imaginative tale of genial will-o'-the-wisps, a self-sacrificing snake, a dumb giant, and a beautiful maiden

with lethal eyes is another lesson in the self-control and communal effort necessary for a stable society, applicable both to the German refugees and to the European nations leading the War of the First Coalition in response to the French Revolution. Significantly, *Conversations* ends without returning to the frame. The Abbé has been teaching his listeners (and us, his readers) how to interpret fiction; the fairy tale is our final exam to see if we've learned our lessons in both civilized behavior and critical reading. Goethe took a risk by ending with a fairy tale, for he "is not proposing simple escapism from the real world," as Jane Brown cautions (20); rather, he is proposing that quality literature teaches us how to live in the real world. Because of its eccentric form, *Conversations of German Refugees* is the least known of Goethe's novels, but it's a brilliant demonstration of both his literary powers and of his conception of the proper role of literature in society.[110]

Goethe was a great admirer of a novel published in four installments from 1785 to 1790 entitled *Anton Reiser: A Psychological Novel* by Karl Philipp Moritz (1756–93). Reading the first three installments in 1786, Goethe apparently not only revised *Werther* under its influence but also reconceptualized *Wilhelm Meister*, for Moritz's protagonist shares Werther's self-destructive neuroses and Wilhelm's misguided theatrical calling. But more than Goethe, more than any novelist of the time, Moritz delves into his protagonist's first few years to show how one's earliest experiences can determine the rest of one's life.

As the novel's unprecedented subtitle suggests, *Anton Reiser* reads like a case study written by a psychologist who combines objective reporting with evaluative remarks, occasionally making an unprofessional sarcastic aside. (Moritz founded the *Magazine for Empirical Psychology* around the same time he began writing the novel.) He begins with an account of the religious cult his parents belonged to, supporting Richard Dawkins's charge (in *The God Delusion*) that early religious indoctrination is a form of child abuse. Living in poverty, Anton's parents seek in self-obliterating Quietism an escape from their miserable lives, as their son will later do with literature. Anton, the narrator reports, "was oppressed from his cradle onwards:

> The first sounds that met his ear and were understood by his dawning intellect were the mutual curses and objurgations of the indissoluble marital bond.
>
> Although he had a father and mother, he was forsaken even in his earliest youth by both father and mother, for he did not know to which of them he should turn, to whom he should be attached, since they hated each other and yet were equally close to him.
>
> In his earliest youth he never tasted the caresses of fond parents, was never rewarded after some small effort by a smile.
>
> When he entered his parents' house, he entered a house of discontentment, anger, tears, and complaints.
>
> These first impressions have never been erased from his soul, and have often filled it with black thoughts that no philosophy could drive away.[111]

"These first impressions" determine the rest of his life, a hard-luck story that breaks off when Anton is about 20. He tries to compensate for this early neglect with dreams of becoming either a preacher, an orator, an actor, or an author—anything that will win him the attention his parents denied him. He has nothing in particular to say, as the narrator often remarks during his account of Anton's failed attempts to achieve any of these goals, just a childish need for people to applaud him for saying it. Unlike the similar protagonists of Butler's *Way of All Flesh* and Joyce's *Portrait of the Artist*, Anton doesn't triumph over his religious upbringing and childhood humiliations.

Part 1 of the novel records a number of seemingly insignificant anecdotes that account for Anton's feelings of neglect, self-contempt, victimhood (he's often unjustly accused of misdemeanors), and crippling lack of confidence, which, along with his poverty, perpetual outsider status, religious guilt over his inability "to lead a truly godly and pious life" (106), and general geekiness doom him to a frustrating life that is painful to read. Aware that most novelists skip over these early details, Moritz defends them in his preface to part 2 as an important step in the genre's pursuit of greater realism: "Anyone who values such a faithful portrayal will not be offended by what initially seems trivial and insignificant, but will bear in mind that the intricate texture of a human life consists of an infinite number of trifles,

all of which assume great importance when interwoven, however insignificant they may seem in themselves" (87). With psychological acuity, the narrator will note how a seemingly insignificant trifle like Anton's accidentally tearing a page in his headmaster's book by turning it too quickly becomes "the principal source of all the sufferings that henceforth awaited Reiser in his school years; they resulted chiefly from the low opinion of the headmaster, whose approval, which mattered so much to him, Reiser had forfeited by turning over the page too quickly" (132). (The pedagogic narrator also uses incidents like this to argue that educators need to show greater patience and understanding with their students.) The narrator also notes the self-consuming nature of embarrassment: "this idea caused him to behave in company in a self-conscious, silly, and stupid fashion, and he himself was probably more aware of this self-consciousness and silly behavior than anyone else" (135).

Even more remarkable than Moritz's attention to childhood trauma—common enough today but not in the 18th century: no one then would have dreamed of discussing bed-wetting, as Moritz does—is his investigation of psychological concepts like word-association and involuntary memory. The narrator informs us "Anton as a child used to form strange pictures and notions of people and towns suggested by the sound of their names," adding that the relative pitch "of the vowels in such a name did most to determine such an image" (40). I'm tempted to quote the two-page passage in which a pastor's use of the expression "the heights of reason" leads Anton to think of the organ loft in the church, then a gallery tower in Hanover where musicians announce the mornings and evenings, then the tower itself with its clock dial and bell, to dreams "on lofty staircases in a thousand labyrinthine windings" that bring him back down to the organ loft and finally to the pastor's "heights of reason," leaving him with yearning tears in his eyes for such unobtainable heights (70–71). More than a century before Proust dipped a madeleine into his tea, the narrator notes the workings of involuntary memory: after a religious painting is revarnished in an oppressive house where his protagonist must live for a while, "the recollection of its smell, which persisted for some weeks, was for Anton always associated with the idea of his condition at that time. Whenever he smelt varnish, all the unpleasant images of that time arose involuntarily in his soul; and contrariwise, if he found himself in a situation that bore some

chance resemblances to that one, he fancied that he could smell varnish" (46). The novel contains dozens of similar examples of how "the soul works" (41) that are highly unusual in an 18th-century novel; I had to keep checking the copyright page to remind myself this novel was published in 1785, not 1985.

As Anton grows up and attends various schools—always the new kid, always forced by poverty into wearing the wrong clothes and living in attics, always taunted by his socially adept classmates—he begins losing himself in novels and plays, which further isolate him. Indeed, there are so many references to books that Moritz's English translator claims *Anton Reiser* is "virtually a summary of eighteenth-century literary history" (xix). In the narrator's unromantic view, literature is as dangerous as religious mania when it's used as an escape from life (rather than as an enhancement). Greatly moved by Goethe's *Werther*, Anton's self-destructive tendency pushes him often to the brink of suicide, pulled back only by his recurring, unrealistic dreams of fame.[112] In the last part of the novel, Reiser goes "on the road" in bohemian fashion—*Reiser* is German for "traveler"—starving most of the time and wandering in a psychotic daze in which he has trouble distinguishing fantasy from reality. The narrator's account of the disintegration of the teenager's ego is astonishing, as in this passage (it's hard to resist quoting extensively from the startling novel):

> Thenceforth, whenever he saw an animal being slaughtered, he always compared himself to it mentally—and as he so often had the opportunity to see this happening at the butcher's [where Anton lodges], for a long time all his thoughts were fixed on the attempt to divine the difference between himself and such a slaughtered animal.—He would often stand for hours staring at a calf, with head, eyes, ears, mouth, and nose; and, just as he did with *human strangers*, he would lean as close as possible to the calf, often in the foolish delusion that he might gradually manage to think himself into the being of such an animal—he wanted intensely to know the difference between himself and the animal—and sometimes after contemplating it for a long time he would forget himself so that he really believed that for a moment he had apprehended the *nature of the existence* of such a being.—In short, from his childhood onwards he

> often wondered what it would be like for him if he were, for example, a dog living among people, or some other animal. (183)

Always back to his childhood. The narrator's objective relationship to his protagonist is equally startling; any other novelist of the period (except perhaps for Voltaire) would have solicited pity for this decent but psychologically damaged boy, especially since the novel is autobiographical and the temptations of self-pity and -justification must have been great. But Moritz's narrator keeps his distance and limits himself to clinical observations on his case study (who sounds like one of David Foster Wallace's solipsistic neurotics):

> It was the undeserved paralysis of his soul, resulting from his own parents' disregard of him, that from his childhood on he had not yet managed to overcome.—It was impossible for him to regard anyone else as *his equal*—everyone seemed somehow to be *more important, more significant* in the world than he was—hence signs of friendship from others always felt like a kind of *condescension*—since he *thought he could be despised*, he really was despised—and often he interpreted something as contempt when somebody else with more self-confidence would never have understood it in that way. . . . Strong self-confidence irresistibly consumes its weaker rival—*by mockery, by contempt, by stigmatizing its object as ridiculous.—Becoming ridiculous* is a kind of annihilation, and *making someone ridiculous* is an unsurpassably murderous assault on that person's self-confidence. (259–60)

At the end of the novel, when Reiser makes one final, potentially life-saving attempt to join an acting troupe in Leipzig, the heartless narrator—guilty himself of making Reiser look ridiculous—concludes his report with a final jab of sarcastic irony; overcoming great odds to reach Leipzig, Reiser receives "the comforting news that the worthy director of this troupe had no sooner arrived in Leipzig than he had sold all the properties and absconded with the money.—Speich's troupe, therefore, was now a scattered flock" (351). Not a word on how this crushing disappointment effects Reiser. Your hour is up, the next patient is waiting.

Anton Reiser is revolutionary. Few novelists before Moritz would abandon their protagonists like that without comment, or maintain such a pitilessly objective tone, or avoid a romantic subplot, or focus so tightly on how (as Wordsworth would put it a few decades later) "The child is father of the man." Its style also breaks with tradition: translator Robertson notes "the seeming artlessness of Moritz's text, with its occasional ambiguous pronouns and incoherent sentences, its many short paragraphs, and its idiosyncratic punctuation" (xxiv–xxv). The novel is an evolutionary leap toward inwardness and realism in fiction, and also gives new purposes for novels: not merely to provide entertainment or inspire romantic dreams, but to alert readers to the many ways parents and educators inadvertently wound children psychologically, and to promote empathy for the walking wounded among us.

While writing *Anton Reiser*, Moritz also wrote a two-part novel entitled *Andreas Hartknopf* (1786, 1790). "In form and style the work is very different from the autobiographical *Anton Reiser*," Emmel tells us. "Moritz no longer relates the story of his hero chronologically, but presents episodes in which symbolic relationships are of primary importance" (66). Sounds intriguing, but since it has never been translated into English, let's move on to another writer associated even closer with Goethe.

After achieving fame with several plays full of Storm and Stress, Friedrich von Schiller (1759–1805) began to experience doubts about his work and turned to writing essays on aesthetics and editing a journal called *Thalia*. To attract more readers to the latter, he published there the first installments of a novel entitled *The Ghost-seer* (*Der Geisterseher*, 1786–89), which he eventually abandoned to write history. Brought out in book form in 1789 and translated into English in 1795, this 100-page novella is one of Germany's first contributions to the Gothic novel, which had been haunting England and Spain since the 1760s, and which crested in the 1790s during the French Terror, not surprisingly. As noted earlier with Goethe's *Conversations*, times of upheaval and uncertainly vomit forth tales of terror and uncertainty that reflect and magnify readers' fears. The Germans specialized in a species of Gothic called the *Bundesroman*, or secret-society thriller, a genre that has made Dan Brown richer than the dreams of avarice. Masons, Rosicrucians, and the Illuminati offered alternatives to mainstream religion, which was wilting under the harsh light

of the Enlightenment, providing its members with a haven for mystery, brotherhood and exclusivity, and raising suspicions among outsiders, a paranoia novelists were happy to exploit. (You'll recall that Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister* also has a secret-society subplot.)

Haunting Schiller's *Ghost-seer* is a mysterious figure known as the Armenian, who has taken a sinister interest in a 35-year-old prince in line for a throne. Negligently educated, a Protestant "by birth, not by investigating the matter, which was something he had never done" (6), the prince is stalked in Venice by the Armenian, who seems to save him from an elaborate scam by a Sicilian sorcerer who pretends to raise a former friend from the dead, a thrilling scene that must have had *Thalia*'s readers on the edge of their seats. After the Sicilian—modeled on the famous impostor Cagliostro—confesses how he performed his necromantic act, the prince is plunged into uncertainty about everything, including his religion, which he had previously associated with the world of magic and now suspects is likewise an elaborate scam. Swinging from one extreme to the other, the prince joins a secret society of libertines called the Bucentauro, living large until he runs out of money, at which point he falls in love with a mysterious woman he meets in a church. The novel sputters to a stop with unexplained references to her death, his conversion to Catholicism, and political upheavals back home, all of which seem to be the machinations of the Armenian.

The first half of the novel has the appeal of a Sherlock Holmes story as the prince "solves" the necromantic crime, logically deducing the Armenian's part in the Sicilian's scam. The second half takes the form of letters from one of the prince's friends, a formal disruption (imitated by many Gothicists) that simulates the disruption of normalcy in this genre. It starts well as we're told how a poorly educated person can do further harm to himself by reading at random: "the unskillful hand that was involved in the choice of these writings ensured that, unfortunately, he always came across the books that neither his reason nor his heart were much improved by" (63–64). The prince's descent into financial ruin is less interesting, and there are only a few pages where the giant of German drama flexes his rhetorical muscles—specifically when the prince rants about how "uncertainty is the most terrible damnation" (39) and how utterly subjective theology is:

> If we take away that which man has drawn from his own human breast and wrongly imagined to be the purpose of a deity and the law of Nature, what is left us?—What came before me and what will follow me I see as two black, impenetrable veils hanging down at either extremity of human existence and which no living man has yet drawn aside. Several hundred generations already stand before those veils with their torches, trying to guess what may lie behind. Many see their own shadows, the shapes of their passion, magnified and moving across the veil of futurity, and start in fear and trembling at the sight of their own image. Poets, philosophers and founders of states have painted their own dreams on them, cheerful or gloomy as the sky over their heads was darker or brighter; and distance always deceived them with its prospects. Many impostors too exploit this general curiosity and amaze people's excited imaginations with their strange mummeries. Deep silence reigns behind this veil; nobody who has once gone behind it sends back any answer; all that can be heard is the hollow echo of the question, as if it had merely resounded in a tomb. (80–81)

Most people would rather hear anything than that "deep silence," an anxiety exploited by theologians and impostors alike: the "strange mummeries" of the Mass, the séance, or the path to Nirvana answer the same fearful need.

Given that the novel is about the challenge of living with uncertainty—a challenge the prince fails by converting to Catholicism, seeing through a hokey ghost but not the Holy Ghost—it's aesthetically appropriate that *The Ghost-seer* ends in uncertainty, and perhaps that, along with his declining interest in the work, is why Schiller left it unfinished. But even in its unfinished state, *The Ghost-seer* is an intriguing and influential work.

A secret society is also at the heart of the first full-length Gothic novel in German literature, *Hermann von Inna* (1788) by Christiane Benedikte Naubert (1756–1819), a remarkably prolific woman who published some 70 works of fiction and fairy tales between 1779 and her death. Set in Germany in the late 14th century, this lively *Bundesroman* features two virtuous characters attached to the Bavarian court, Ida Munster and the title character, who try to keep their hands clean amidst the dirty politics of the corrupt court while nurturing their secret love. Both are targeted by the infamous Vehmgericht, a secret tribunal that terrorized Westphalia in the

late Middle Ages (and still active when Naubert wrote). A cross between the Masons and the Inquisition, they are, as Hermann tells Munster,

> a formidable society, the members of which, spread over the earth, are informed almost in the twinkling of an eye of what passes in the most distant parts of their invisible empire, as if they were connected together by some magic chain. You have seen how numerous are the judges and associates of this tribunal; and I have reason to believe that it has more adherents among the people than among the nobility. Those of the former class constitute the links of that immense chain, the secret wheels of that fearful engine, with the thousand eyes of which the SEERS, as they call themselves, obtain knowledge of everything that is done, and discover mysteries that seem impenetrable.[113]

Both characters run afoul of the tribunal after they are framed—Ida for witchcraft, Hermann for murder—and there are spooky court scenes in the dead of night, daring escapes from agents of the Vehmgericht, machinations in a convent "in the depth of a forest amidst the Carpathian mountains," festering family feuds and secrets (Ida turns out to be the kidnapped princess of Wirtemburg), a lecherous archbishop, a cemetery scene at midnight, a secret journal, and other tropes of Gothic fiction. There is even a hint of lesbianism: Ida bathes with a female friend named Imago and sometimes shares a bed with her—and that's *before* she's immured in a convent. A worldly observer, scornful of authority figures (both political and religious), Naubert deftly captures the suspicion and paranoia in the German air in the years leading up to the French Revolution.

A secret society and virtually every other Gothic cliché crowd the pages of *The Victim of Magical Delusion: A Magico-Political Tale* (*Geschichte eines Geistersehers*, 1790–93) by Cajetan Tschink (1763–1813), a spellbinding thriller that, as its German title suggests, was heavily influenced by Schiller's *Geisterseher*. Tschink set out to write a complete novel along the lines suggested by Schiller's incomplete one, substituting a credulous Portuguese duke for Schiller's prince and a mysterious Irishman for the Armenian. Less subtle than Schiller but just as aware that "incertitude is the most painful thing" (1:50), Tschink dramatizes how easy

it is for an intelligent person to fool people who rely on their senses, imagination, and faith.

The story involves Portugal's revolt against Spain in 1640. The mysterious Irishman Hiermansor wins the young Duke Miguel to the Portuguese cause by convincing him that he (like any cult leader) possesses special powers, and does so by staging a variety of elaborate hoaxes involving every Gothic trick in the book: haunted castles, ghosts, "worm-eaten half-decayed pictures," a secret society, premonitions, hauntings, necromantic rites, nightmares, bleeding specters, spies, fake deaths, cemetery scenes—you name it, it's here somewhere in these garish pages. Periodically the natural explanation for these tricks is revealed to Miguel, only to be followed by new wonders that defy his much-tested credulity until he doesn't know what to believe anymore. Things are complicated further by his love for a beautiful young widow, who dies before his eyes during a shipwreck. He then comes under the influence of a pious fraud named Alumbrado, who further befuddles Miguel with religious miracles that are as phony as the Irishman's Gothic scams—Tschink tiptoes on edge of blasphemy—all of which are cover-ups for political machinations as different parties vie for control of the Portuguese throne.

The Irishman is sometimes called "the Unknown," and the novel is very much about people's fear of the unknown and their consequent willingness to accept any explanation, however ludicrous, to explain away the unknown rather than to put in the time-consuming work of investigating it. An intellectually mature person "soars above the common herd by the power of reasoning" (1:143), and Hiermansor tries to educate Miguel by deluding him and then explaining how he did it—an educational tactic Miguel challenges, but a lesson the tricky author hopes to impart to the reader as well. The second half of the novel is filled with sophisticated discussions of whether the ends justify the means (the Irishman's defense of his methods), the dangers of the imagination and of circumstantial evidence, faith versus reason, and other topics that offset the first half's ludicrous, haunted house-ride quality. An early reference to Cervantes (1:85) suggests Tschink is having some fun with the Gothic genre, and with the practice of using asterisks to conceal real names (as in "Ma***d, the capital of Sp**n"). The author obviously delights in the intricacy of his work, taking as a

compliment the complaint one of Miguel's friends lodges against the ingenious Irishman:

> I may be mistaken, your proceedings are however riddles to me, if I do not suppose that an arrogant activity has prompted you to contrive extraordinary intrigues and to have recourse to marvellous machineries. People of your genius are wont to do so. You despise the ways of common men, force new roads through insurmountable rocks, entangle your man in numberless magic fetters, with no other view than to have the pleasure of seeing your prisoner ensnare himself deeper and deeper by his attempts to regain his liberty. The simple, artless turn of a play does not suit a genius like yours, which delights only in knitting and dissolving intricate knots, and in having recourse to artificial, complicated machines; obstacles and dangers serve only to give additional energy to your activity. (3:184–85)

Those complications and that energy enable this classic *Schauerroman* (horror novel) to soar above the graveyard of Gothic novels, and its intelligent engagement with questions of ontology, unexamined belief, and political brainwashing (Hiermansor resembles a CIA recruitment officer) are as relevant today as they were in Tschink's time.

Two other German Gothics owe their questionable immortality to Jane Austen: in chapter 6 of *Northanger Abbey*—written in the 1790s at the height of the Gothic fad, though not published until 1817—Isabella offers to lend Catherine a handful of "horrid" novels, two of which are translations from the German.

"The hurricane was howling, the hailstones beating against the windows, the hoarse croaking of the raven bidding adieu to autumn, and the weather-cock's dismal creaking joined with the mournful dirge of the solitary owl" as I read *The Necromancer, or The Tale of the Black Forest*, an English adaptation of *Der Geisterbanner* (1792) by Karl Friedrich Kahlert (1765–1813) writing under the pseudonym Lorenz Flammenberg. I say "adaptation" because among the liberties taken by the English translator, Peter Will (who also did *The Victim of Magical Delusion*), he pads out Kahlert's original novel with a true-crime story written by Schiller several

years earlier.[114] (Surprisingly, Kahlert approved of this unauthorized addition and translated it into German for a later edition of his novel.) Cobwebbed with hoary clichés (as the opening line quoted above indicates), lurching from third-person narrative to a first-person document with interpolated tales, *The Necromancer* begins like a ghost story but morphs into a detective novel about a man named Volkert who scams his way through Germany pretending to raise the dead (and in one case, the still-living). Kahlert doesn't wait until the end to reveal the rational explanation for irrational events, as some Gothicists like Ann Radcliffe did, which dilutes the suspense, as the does the alternation of narrative forms. The author seems less interested in terrifying readers and mocking credulous citizens (though he does both) than in exploring the nature of the criminal mind, which is also the subject of the Schiller episode the translator added at the end. Volkert admits he undertook his scams from "the pleasure everyone feels when he can prove the superior powers of his genius, which is the headspring that animates us as well to good as to bad actions . . . and raises us above the common herd," but he also notes his impostures were only made possible with the cooperation of others: "one is always certain to find people who will lend their assistance in cheating their fellow citizens" (164). Volker pulls one scam because a young woman offered sex in return for scaring her father into allowing her to marry her lover, and the narrator notes with disgust the "more than beastly satisfaction" of the crowd that gathers to watch Volker's execution. Gothic novels tend to return to normalcy after teasing us with visions of supernatural malevolence, but *The Necromancer*, like *The Victim of Magical Delusion*, ends with a dour view of normalcy.

Speaking of normalcy: in his introduction to the Valancourt edition I've been quoting, Jeffrey Cass finds a homosexual subtext in *The Necromancer* —in keeping with with the outing of many Gothic texts by theorists recently—but which I find unconvincing, especially since Cass doesn't even mention the one arguably homosexual attraction in the novel, that of Hellfried (the principal narrator) for an Austrian officer who he calls "the darling of my heart" (108) and who he dotes on long after they've parted (132). A more significant subtext is relationship between religion and the supernatural, and the implication that one is as phony as the other.

The other German translation on Isabella's reading list is *Horrid Mysteries*, a ludicrous title for an ambitious novel called *Der Genius* (1791–95) by Carl Grosse (1768–1847). Austen may have chosen it because of a few lurid scenes featuring an Illuminati-like secret society that convinces a young nobleman named Carlos to join them in reforming the world, by violent means if necessary. As a blood-signing bonus, the society sends him a voluptuous woman who joins him "in a furious trance of the highest sensual gratification" (64)—a sex scene that must have brought a blush to Miss Austen's cheek. (If she even read it; perhaps she only used the title.) Carlos quits the society after he realizes they want to use him as an assassin, and in revenge they send a "genius" (a guardian angel, malevolent in this instance) to harass him, but their machinations fade into the background as Carlos spends most of the long novel trying to find, in one critic's opinion, a "way of life based on simple everyday virtues and values with sense replacing rationalism and imagination romantic excess."[115] This is a difficult task in a novel where characters often wear disguises, stage deceptions, and undergo unexpected changes. As in other Gothics, the supernatural is exposed as natural: Carlos's "genius" turns out to be not a "transparent airy being" (86) but his trusted valet Alfonso, who is further revealed to be Carlos's uncle. His true guardian angel, revealed on the last page in a rather ridiculous scene in Venice, is his unfaithful but repentant wife.

Grosse explores the related notions of paranoia, providence, destiny, conspiracy, fatalism, and "higher Powers" as Carlos wonders whether he can control his own life or whether he is controlled by others, and, at a higher level, whether world events are controlled by "invisible hands" working behind the scenes. He also explores the dangerous comfort of belonging to a group—even a nefarious one—versus the challenge of living apart from others, and whether one should try to improve society or improve oneself. The importance of male bonding and the danger of sexual relations are also dramatized, sometimes with unsubtle imagery. (The pent-up attraction between Carlos and his future wife explodes when he spies her fondling his cane in secret, surprises her, and accidentally discharges his rifle, which was "unhappily cocked"; the bullet nicks his finger, and "the blood streamed into the face and on the bosom of the Baroness" [267].) But

Grosse seems to have been uncertain whether he wanted to write a *Schauerroman*, a *Bundesroman*, or a philosophical novel, and the result is an incongruous mixture of all three. But the horror is mild (and offset by some comic scenes), the secret society appears only sporadically, and the philosophy is overshadowed by the Gothic trappings. Grosse evidently wanted to distance himself from other novels of the time—Carlos's best friend "had received some fatal lunatic spots from the reading of some German novels" (253)—but his attempt to use elements of pop fiction for serious purposes, while admirable, doesn't quite succeed.[116] We are not told whether Austen's Catherine ever got around to reading *Horrid Mysteries*, but I'm sure she would have been disappointed. "Are you sure they are all horrid?" she asks Isabella of her reading list. Not this one, dear.

But one young reader who was transported by Grosse's novel is Ludwig Tieck (1773–1853), who, after a marathon reading of it in 1792, was so overwrought "that he afterwards experienced some kind of hallucinatory or psychic experience while in a state of exhausted semiconsciousness."[117] Three years later, Tieck—best known for his fairy tales and supernatural stories written later in the 19th century—published his first two novels: a derivative Oriental Gothic called *Abdallah* (1795), then a magniloquent epistolary novel entitled *William Lovell* (1795–96), the greatest German example of that genre in the 18th century (if you regard Goethe's one-sided *Werther* more as a journal) and a key work in the transition from Gothicism to Romanticism.

The title character's father, a wealthy Englishman concerned about "his son's excessively sensitive sentimentality and enthusiasm" and his unsuitable attachment to a friend's sister, sends William on a grand tour of Europe, which goes horribly wrong.[118] First, William is seduced by a worldly Parisian woman who takes advantage of the young Englishman's bookishness: "I am so sentimental," she smirks to a confidant, "like Rousseau's Julie, a bit melancholy, a tincture of something out of Young[*'s Night Thoughts*] with one of those insufferably sententious, windbaggish heroines of the English novels. You would hate me if you saw me in one of my tragic moods; but Lovell is positively enchanted by them; in his mind he takes me for a Richardsonian ideal, for a creature of divine and superterrestrial essence" (2.15). William is naïve enough to believe *he*

seduced *her*, and callous enough to shrug off his infidelity to his girl back in England. In Paris he takes on two traveling companions, a melancholy German named Balder and an Italian named Rosa, the agent (we learn later) for a mysterious Italian out to get revenge on William's father by leading the impressionable son into a life of vice once he reaches Rome, which William too easily succumbs to: consorting with courtesans, seducing a peasant girl, and joining a secret society, all of which William reports with specious, shameless pride. After he is throughly corrupted, he sneaks back to England, seduces a friend's sister and attempts to poison her brother, and flees back to Italy, where he is tracked down and killed in a duel.

Combining elements of Gothic fiction—a secret society, a mysterious figure who turns out to be a conman, crimes and visions—with the theme of corruption from recent French epistolary novels like Laclos's *Dangerous Liaisons* and Restif's *Perverted Peasant*—Tieck dramatizes what might be called the mid-youth crisis of four overeducated young men trying to understand their place in the adult world: two of them, the title character and Balder, torture themselves with Wertherian doubts and delusions and come to a bad end; the other two, a wag named Wilmont and a slightly older, no-nonsense gent named Mortimer, marry nice girls and settle down to become rural gentry. These four and a dozen other related characters (parents, friends, lovers, servants) exchange letters over a three-year period (1793–95) explaining themselves to each other, debating (in effect) the tenets of Romanticism, and struggling with decisions that will affect the rest of their lives. Only the reader gets the complete story: unlike most epistolary novels of the period, there's no fictitious editor who explains how he came by all these letters and how we should interpret them.

William Lovell is like Werther on acid, a highly imaginative dreamer who expresses himself in plumes of purple prose. With the imperious confidence of a 20-year-old pseudointellectual who has overdosed on Shakespearean tragedies and Gothic thrillers, William is convinced, as he sets out on his European tour, that "a dark and dubious foreboding has assailed me, as if these present moments were marking one of the epochs of my life; it is as though I were being bidden a tearful farewell by my [guardian] angel, who now abandons me to the play of relations—as I am thrust into a dark wilderness, wherein I now and then discern the fluctuating forms of malevolent demons among the twilit shadows" (1.2) The victim of a vivid

imagination and premonitions of doom ever since childhood (see the remarkable letter at 5.10), William enlivens his dispatches on the road to ruin with flamboyant rhetoric, extended metaphors pushing the limits of prose and sometimes metamorphosing from poetic prose into formal poetry. The reader's initial sympathy for this "stormy and stressful" aesthete quickly fades as William embraces the dark side of Romanticism—Satanic egotism, self-destructive behavior, cold-heartedness—but his language keeps us enthralled; after his father forbids William's jejune plans for marriage, he compares his imminent loss of self-control to horses in harness: "Already I can see the wild horses tearing free of their reins; with a terrible clatter they gallop down the steep mountain path, trailing the carriage behind them; then, the vehicle lies smashed to pieces on the crags, and he stands there bemoaning the damage. He has willed it; let it be!" (3.29). Later, he observes, "Everything that I used to term my emotions lies slaughtered and lifeless all around me, a brutally dismantled plaything of my unripe youth, the shattered magic lantern with which I frittered away my time" (6.12). There are gorgeous paeans to wine, to lust, to nature. Like Werther, William is a writer of extraordinary power.

If, like *Werther*, we had only William's letters, *William Lovell* would be one of the bleakest, most despairing novels ever written. But Tieck begins the novel with a witty letter by Wilmont, and interleaves the dark epistles of William and Balder with a wide enough variety of other letters to put these romantic egotists into perspective. Tieck also cleverly juxtaposes letters for ironic effect so that, for example, William's lofty opinion of Paris is undercut by his servant Willy's street-level view, and William's attraction to a false friend immediately follows one from his father warning him against false friends. But these other letters aren't enough to offset the pessimistic tendency of the novel. As in earlier Gothic novels, the machinations of the mysterious man who stalks and corrupts William is explained away at the end, but there's no return to normalcy, perhaps because in the revolutionary 1790s, normalcy was in ruins. It's interesting that even though book 2 of *William Lovell* takes place in Paris in 1793, there isn't a single reference to the terrors going on; the novel's compromised idealism, secret betrayals, and moral degradation effectively evoke the times without resorting to any topical references.

Tieck leaves open the question of how one should gain "sovereignty over [the] soul," as William puts it (3.7), meaning control over one's emotions. The more conventional characters do so by submitting themselves, like blinkered horses, to comfortable conformity, while William and Balder, on the other hand, indulge their emotions, explore the nature of the soul to its darkest depths, and become a criminal and a hermit, respectively. The first group suffers from a lack of imagination, the second pair from an excess. Tieck's intentions aren't clear: he clearly condemns his melancholy misanthropes in their own damning words, but, as Roger Paulin notes, Tieck seems "only half-heartedly on the side of virtue, going through the motions of moral outrage" (58). At any rate, *William Lovell* is largely about the power of the imagination, capable of soaring insights or dangerous deceptions. Like William's wild horses, the imagination is something that he, like Phaeton in the Greek myth, isn't strong enough to control, and he perishes as a result. Tieck, on the other hand, keeps the horses of his imagination well under control for this exemplary work of Romanticism.[119]

Friedrich Schlegel (1772–1829) disagreed. "He considered it boring," Blackall reports, "thin in characterization, nihilistic in both its prose and its poetry, and deemed the whole 'a duel between poetry and prose' in which the prose is trampled and the poetry kills itself."[120] But Schlegel is unfair to Tieck because he had a radically different idea of what a novel should be. It should focus not on stories and public life but on reflections and the inner life; it should be frankly realistic,[121] but it should also be metaphoric, allegorical, metaphysical, a "formed, artificial chaos" that includes "conversations, dreams, letters, recollection. Fine loquaciousness."[122] It should progress by way of "arabesques": ornamental digressions and variations that comment elliptically on the novel's themes. A novel should be "a colorful hodgepodge of sickly wit," "a mixture of storytelling, song, and other forms," and should present "a sentimental theme in a fantastic form." Schlegel felt "what is best in the best of novels is nothing but a more or less veiled confession of the author, the profit of his experience, the quintessence of his originality."[123] He put theory into practice in his short novel *Lucinde* (1799), perhaps the most daringly experimental novel of the

18th century, even more so than *Tristram Shandy* or the eccentric novels of Schlegel's countryman Jean Paul (the closing act of our German cabaret) because Schlegel works without their safety nets of whimsy and sentimentalism. It fell flat with critics and readers alike, as most unconventional artworks do upon first appearance, but as Emmel notes, *Lucinde* is "ripe for discussion in connection with the novelistic experiments of the twentieth century" (92).

Like good poetry, *Lucinde* resists paraphrase because the plot is buried beneath reflections, fancies, and allegories, and because the language is gnomic, hieroglyphic. Essentially it's the story of how a restless artist named Julius found the love of his life: a zaftig, free-spirited artist named Lucinde, who had a child in a previous relationship (not necessarily a marriage). At a time when "sensual" and "spiritual" were considered antonyms, Julius and Lucinde fuse the two into a religion of love, enabling Julius to unite not with abstractions like the infinite or the godhead but with the earthy natural world: the novel is overgrown with plants, gardens, and flowers, and in one arabesque Julius concludes the "most perfect mode of life would actually be nothing more than *pure vegetating*."[124] Their vegetable love produces a daughter, but she and Lucinde's other child die (apparently), and in the final sections of the novel, their relationship starts to expand to include others—male friends, a woman named Juliane—as Julius meditates on "the most meaningful blossoms of lovely life" (130).

Again like good poetry, *Lucinde* generates meaning not through dramatic incidents but via symbols and metaphors. Structured in thirds like the life of a person or a plant ("to blossom, to ripen, and to wilt" [104]), only the middle third, entitled "Apprenticeship for Manhood," resembles a conventional novel, and even it is told in compressed form. Schlegel tosses out the baggage and furniture that slow down most novels for a brisk account of a young man not unlike William Lovell: "He became sensual from spiritual despair, committed imprudent acts out of spite against fate, and was genuinely immoral in an almost innocent way" (78). Writing in third person, Julius runs through the other women he knew before he met Lucinde, notes how his own painting blossomed under her influence—"The shapes themselves perhaps did not always conform to the conventional rules of artistic beauty" (101), self-consciously commenting on the novel

he's writing—and how they come "to unfold themselves into the most beautiful religion" (103). This section is preceded by six short sections—in which Julius meditates on their current relationship by way of letters, fantasies, and allegories—and followed by six more sections in a variety of genres, resulting in an achronological, seemingly chaotic narrative, but in fact "a formed, artificial chaos," just as Schlegel called for. Thumbing his nose at conventional form, Julius/Schlegel likewise ignores conventional morality: living with (rather than marrying) his beloved, forsaking the kingdom of heaven for the plant kingdom's more organic lessons, reversing sex roles, and luxuriating in sensuality—which earned *Lucinde* an undeserved reputation as pornography.

As Julius's remark about "pure vegetating" should suggest, a subtle sense of irony is at work in *Lucinde*, famously misread by Kierkegaard in his *Concept of Irony* (1841). Not only did the Danish philosopher condemn Schlegel for mocking the sanctity of Christian marriage and promoting sensuality, atheism, and immorality in his little novel, but he charged that Schlegel's irony entails rejection of the world rather than reconciliation, even though Julius's ironic proposal to live like a plant represents an admirable reconciliation with the actual world (as opposed to the spiritual world, which Kierkegaard privileged).[125] Of course, Schlegel is not suggesting we live like plants—he certainly didn't—only that we consider the lilies of the field along with the customs of society when choosing a way of life.

Actually, Kierkegaard hits upon a better way of reading *Lucinde*, only to reject it. Referring to Julius and Lucinde's two-year-old daughter, the melancholy Dane asks,

> Were it possible to imagine that the whole of *Lucinde* were merely a caprice, an arbitrarily fashioned child of whim and fancy gesticulating with both her legs like the little Wilhelmine without a care for her dress or the world's judgment; were it but a light-headed whimsicality that found pleasure in setting everything on its head, in turning everything upside down; were it merely a witty irony over the total ethic identified with custom and use: who then would be so ridiculous as not to laugh at

> it, who would be such a distempered grouch that he could not even gloat over it? (306)

Convinced, however, that *Lucinde* is a "doctrinaire" work that "seeks to abrogate all ethics, not simply in the sense of custom and usage, but that ethical totality which is the validity of mind, the domination of the spirit over the flesh" (306), this distempered grouch doesn't realize Schlegel's concerns are aesthetic, not ethical. He wanted to turn *the novel* on its head, not Christian civilization, and merely drew upon his own relationship with his mistress, Dorothea Viet, for an experiment in creating an impressionistic, collagelike account of an unconventional love affair. An unconventional affair might best be rendered in unconventional form, and Julius wants to convey how their affair felt to him, the wild flights of imagination it inspired, not to recommend it to others. *Lucinde* is an object (as Barthelme would say), not an object lesson; Schlegel even subtitles the novel "Confessions of a Blunderer," hardly an epithet for a cultural revolutionary.

"I want at least to suggest to you in divine symbols what I can't tell you in words," Julius tells Lucinde (104), and Schlegel's novel is less a calculated affront to "the prejudices of society" (87) than a challenge to novelists to incorporate the methodology of poetry into their novels, to narrate with symbols rather than mere words, to render "the inspired poetry of fleeting life" (56). Leaving *Lucinde* unfinished—what we have is only the first of a projected four-part novel; some sketches and poems are as far as he got with the second part—Schlegel left it to others to elevate the novel to the same realm as poetry.

That goal was gloriously achieved by the great poet Friedrich Hölderlin (1770–1843); the same year *Lucinde* appeared, he published the second half of *Hyperion* (1797, 1799), an epistolary novel in lyrical prose of surpassing beauty. Subtitled "The Hermit in Greece," the novel's title character responds to a request from a German named Bellarmin to tell his life story, and in a series of undated letters Hyperion offers a poetic, meditative account of his idyllic childhood in his native Greece, his early training under Adamas— who inspires the lad with the ideals of ancient Greece—and then his first, uncomfortable time with an older man named Alabanda, who belongs to a secret society (yet again!) plotting to overthrow Turkish

rule. Too unworldly to join Alabanda's mysterious world—there are homosexual overtones to their relationship—Hyperion returns home, falls in love with a splendid young woman named Diotima, and with her visits the ruins of Athens: "Like an immense shipwreck when the hurricanes have fallen silent and the sailors have fled and the corpse of the shattered fleet lies unrecognizable on the sandbank."[126] Hyperion ignores Diotima's suggestion to educate others and instead rejoins Alabanda's rebel band, and in 1770 takes part in several Russian-backed Greek battles against the Turks. Disgusted at the unidealistic actions of his countrymen, who are more interested in looting their fellow Greeks than in winning independence, idealistic Hyperion becomes suicidal, writes Diotima that he's unworthy of her (who consequently withers away and dies, but not before delivering a moving *Liebestod*), recovers and travels to Germany (which disgusts him),[127] then returns to Greece to live in solitude, eventually receiving Bellarmin's request to explain himself.

Hölderlin daringly ignores the chief appeal of the epistolary form—its you-are-there immediacy—to focus on Hyperion's current feelings about his past. Like Wordsworth, he recollects in tranquility the powerful feelings he experienced earlier and transforms them into poetry—that is, into candenced prose with iterative imagery, as in this exultant description of Hyperion and Alabanda's reunion:

> O sun who reared us! cried Alabanda, you shall watch when our courage grows through work, when our project takes shape under the blows of destiny like iron under the hammer.
>
> Each of us inflamed the other.
>
> And may no stain remain, I cried, no nonsense with which the century paints us as the rabble does the walls! O, cried Alabanda, that is why war is so good—
>
> Yes, Alabanda, I cried, as is all great work fostered by man's strength and spirit and no crutch and no waxen wing. Thereby we cast off the slave garments on which destiny stamped us with its crest—
>
> Thereby nothing vain and nothing imposed holds sway any longer, cried Alabanda, thereby we go unadorned, unfettered, naked as in the race at Nemea, to the goal.

> To the goal, I cried, where the young free state dawns and the pantheon of all that is beautiful rises from Greek soil.
>
> Alabanda fell silent for a while. A new red rose in his face, and his figure grew like a refreshed plant into the heights.
>
> O youth! youth! he cried, then I will drink from your wellspring, then I will live and love. I am very joyful, sky of the night, he went on, as if intoxicated, while he walked to the window, like the foliage of a vine you overarch me, and your stars hang down like grapes. (144–45)

OK, a bit stilted (and kinda gay) out of context, but as Hyperion claimed earlier, "the heart exercised its right to poetize" (94). The older Hyperion realizes his true vocation was not to be a rebel but a poet, not to restore Greece's political independence (which wouldn't happen until 1830) but its literary glory. The mid-story breaks between many of the letters seem unnecessary until one realizes Hyperion is taking his time to convert each episode into a prose poem. The final letter ends with a prosaic "More soon": we are reading the work-in-progress of a poet, not the memoirs of a failed idealist. Poetry has allowed Hyperion to recover the connection with nature he felt as a child—plants and flower imagery are as rampant here as in *Lucinde*—to offer the inspiring example of ancient Greece to "barbaric" modern Germany, and to achieve "the resolution of dissonances" in himself, which Hölderlin in his brief preface says is the point of the novel.

The heightened, hieratic language, beautifully sustained throughout the novel, is rich in allusion—to classic Greek literature, of course, but also to the Lutheran Bible and Macpherson's *Ossian*—and allows *Hyperion* to operate simultaneously on several levels, blurring the distinctions between ancient and modern Greece; between revolutionary activities in Greece in the 1770s and France in the 1790s (which Hölderlin supported); between Hyperion's past and present (achieved by the minimal use of quotation marks); and between Hyperion's life and Hölderlin's: The German never even visited Greece, and *Hyperion* can be read as a poeticized account of Hölderlin's own troubled life, especially his relationship to Susette Gontard, whom he called "Diotima." Nevertheless, the story is timeless, mythic. It's a sublime, elegiac achievement, and like *Lucinde* it was panned by the critics.

Hölderlin knew Friedrich von Hardenberg (1772–1801), who knew Tieck and Schlegel, and who under the pen-name Novalis explored some of the same themes and poetic techniques as Hölderlin in two short novels that were published posthumously by Tieck and Schlegel. The first is *The Novices of Sais* (*Die Lehrlinge zu Sais*), which Novalis wrote between 1797 and 1799, then returned to in 1800 with plans to expand it to a full-length "symbolic nature-novel," which illness prevented. The wisp of a story concerns some nature students gathered around an older teacher at a temple in the ancient Egyptian city of Saïs. Convinced that nature presents a "cipher which we discern written everywhere, in wings, eggshells, clouds and snow, in crystals and in stone formations, on ice-covered waters, on the inside and outside of mountains, of plants, beasts, and men, in the lights of heaven, on scored disks of pitch or glass or in iron filings round a magnet," these nameless nature-lovers seek the "key to the magic writing, even a grammar" (3). They offer various readings of nature, all stemming from an ecological awareness of the organic, equal relationship between humans and nature (as opposed to the master-slave "dominance" model sanctioned by Genesis 1:28). Some travelers arrive at the temple and offer further interpretations, for "the ways of contemplating nature are innumerable" (31). The teacher welcomes them, and concludes the novella with a speech on the importance of studying nature, not merely for scientific reasons but to unlock the mysteries of the soul.

One of the travelers encourages the others to be "venturesome" in their speculations about nature and to "praise each man who spins a mesh of new fantasy around things" (81, 83), which describes Novalis' modus operandi. Meshing the Romantic reverence for nature with 18th-century advances in natural science, *The Novices* also offers a charming fairy tale in the middle, narrated by "a merry youth with roses and ivy on his brow" to a morose novice: this floral fable about how Hyacinth mated with Rose Petal involves gossiping flowers, a singing lizard, and a quest for the goddess Isis. The novella's combination of fancy, philosophy, and fairy tale is seductive, and its ecological concerns are prophetic, even anticipating James Lovelock's Gaia hypothesis.

Novalis's other, more famous novel, *Heinrich von Ofterdingen* (written winter 1799–1800, published 1802) is an enchanting tale, set in the Middle Ages, of the making of a poet. Novalis wrote it not in the spirit of *Lucinde*

and *Hyperion* but as a counterblast to Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship*, which he felt mocked the concept of an artistic vocation. Consequently, there is no conflict or subterfuge in 20-year-old Heinrich's path to becoming a poet. He has the support of his bourgeois father, who regrets his own youthful rejection of his vocation as a sculptor to become a commercial craftsman instead, successful but unfulfilled. And he has the support of his mother: awaking from a dream of a blue flower, symbol of the ideal, Heinrich travels with her from Eisenach to her hometown of Augsburg, accompanied by merchants who approve of his vocation, give him pointers on becoming a poet, and retell some of the tales and poems they've heard from medieval troubadours. In Augsburg, Heinrich meets a minnesinger named Klingsohr, who becomes his mentor, and his blue-flower-faced daughter Mathilde, who rather effortlessly becomes his bride. As a masterclass demonstration of his art, Klingsohr narrates a mythy fairy tale—Novalis's attempt to outdo the one that concludes Goethe's *Conversations of German Refugees*—an astro-mystical parable about love and poetry, by turns erotic and psychedelic, that I won't even try to summarize. This concludes part 1 of the novel, entitled "Expectations." Novalis wrote only the first 20 pages of part 2, "The Fulfillment," which finds Heinrich wandering in "apathetic despair" after the premature death of Mathilde.[128] By way of a ghost-girl, he meets a hermit named Sylvester, and they begin a philosophical discussion on the nature of transfiguration (personal and poetic), and there the novel breaks off.

Both a *Künstlerroman* and a critifiction, *Heinrich von Ofterdingen* is dominated by discussions of the art of "poesy," which includes all creative writing, from poetry to fairy tales. While acknowledging the place of inspiration and imagination in a poet's skill-set, Heinrich's mentors emphasize the equal importance of craftsmanship and empirical knowledge. (The traveling merchants discuss business practices with Heinrich, and there's a long digression on mining and metallurgy early on.) "I cannot sufficiently urge you laboriously and diligently to cultivate your intelligence," Klingsohr tells him, "your natural impulse to know how everything happens and logically and sequentially hangs together. Nothing is more needful for the poet than insight into the nature of every occupation, acquaintance with the means to attain every end, and presence of mind to

select the most fitting means according to time and circumstance. Enthusiasm without intelligence is useless and dangerous, and the poet will be capable of few miracles if he himself is astonished by miracles" (1.7).

Novalis performs quite a few miracles himself, such as Gravesian evocations of the noble heritage of poets, back when they were prophets and priests, and their role as historians: "There is more truth in their fairy tales than in learned chronicles" (1.5). Novalis describes what sounds like Wagnerian chromaticism: "Like the patterns of the table, the music changed ceaselessly; and peculiar and difficult as the transitions not infrequently were, still only one simple theme appeared to unite the whole" (1.9; the cast also includes Wagnerian names like Freya and Klingsohr). He offers the novel suggestion that dreams are "a defense against the regularity and routine of life, a playground where the hobbled imagination is freed and revived and where it jumbles together all the pictures of life and interrupts the constant soberness of grown-ups by means of a merry child's play" (1.1). Especially impressive is the lengthy fifth chapter, where Heinrich and a few of the braver merchants explore a cave and discover a hermit living there, an old crusader named Friederich von Hohenzollern, who discourses on prehistory, cavemen, and Pynchonesque telluro-mysticism. He also shows Heinrich an old book, written in Provençal, that not only prefigures Heinrich's story but functions as a metafictional version of Novalis's *Heinrich*: "As far as I know," the hermit says, "it is a novel about the wondrous fortunes of a poet, in which poesy is presented and praised in its manifold relations. The conclusion is missing in this manuscript," he adds, as though Novalis suspected he would not finish his novel.

From the notes Novalis left behind and from Tieck's account of what he told him, *Heinrich* was to have three parts, delving further into the philosophical issues that Sylvester raises. Given the abstract, sometimes mystifying nature of Novalis's writings on the theory of the novel,[129] I doubt the finished novel would have been as appealing as part 1; if Schlegel and Hölderlin wanted to elevate the novel to the realm of poetry, Novalis wanted to elevate it beyond that to mystical theology, a questionable goal given the novel's essentially secular character. (A novel can be anything, but it's better at some things than others.) Unlike the avant-garde *Lucinde* and *Hyperion*, *Heinrich* is a rearguard action, an attempt to reverse what

Schiller called “the disenchantment [literally, de-divinization] of the world” following the Enlightenment, and to re-enchant it through fairy tales and bardic magic. Still, as in Schlegel’s case, it’s a shame we don’t have Novalis’s completed novel, but what we do have is superb, despite its nostalgic yearnings; the spell he casts is hard to resist. If nothing else, *Heinrich von Ofterdingen* should be required reading for every aspiring poet.

During the last decade of the 18th century, nobody was writing more “venturesome” novels than the Germans. Aside from their Gothic thrillers, there were further novels by veterans like Wieland and Goethe, Tieck’s game-changing transformation of Gothicism to Romanticism, and the startlingly innovative novels by young guns like Schlegel, Hölderlin, and Novalis. And I haven’t even got to the most eccentric and beloved German novelist of the 1790s, a writer Schiller described as “alien, like one who has fallen from the moon.”

I love this guy. Jean Paul Friedrich Richter (1763–1825), who in emulation of Jean-Jacques Rousseau published his work under the name Jean Paul, began his writing career in the early 1780s with satirical squibs like *Greenland Lawsuits*, “Jokes in Quarto,” “The Year 1886,” *Selections from the Devil’s Papers*, “Apology for Adultery,” and “The Brewery of My Gastric Juice” before scoring a minor hit with his first novel, *The Invisible Lodge* (*Die unsichtbare Loge*, 1793), which was recommended for publication by none other than the author of *Anton Reiser*. Forget Thümmel, Nicolai, Hippel, and Wezel—what? you’ve forgotten them *already*? see pp. 92–97—Richter is the true German Sterne, not by way of rank imitation but from a similar desire to adapt the genre of the novel to his own idiosyncratic needs. In his erudite novels and in his nonfiction *School for Aesthetics* (1804), he displays his familiarity with German fiction from *Fortunatus* and Fischart up to his contemporaries, and he knew French fiction well, but he was primarily influenced by Sterne and other English novelists like Swift, Fielding, and Richardson. He’s probably the most cosmopolitan novelist of the 18th century.

Thomas Carlyle, one of his earliest British admirers (and translator), warns of the negative first impression Richter's novels can make on the average reader, beginning with *The Invisible Lodge*:

> Piercing gleams of thought do not escape us; singular truths conveyed in a form as singular; grotesque and often truly ludicrous delineations; pathetic, magnificent, far-sounding passages; effusions full of wit, knowledge, and imagination, but difficult to bring under any rubrick whatever; all the elements, in short, of a glorious intellect, but dashed together in such wild arrangement that their order seems the very ideal of confusion. The style and structure of the book appear alike incomprehensible. The narrative is every now and then suspended to make way for some "Extra-leaf," some wild digression upon any subject but the one in hand; the language groans with indescribable metaphors and allusions to all things human and divine; flowing onward, not like a river but like an inundation, circling in complex eddies, chafing and gurgling now this way, now that, till the proper current sinks out of view amid the boundless uproar. We close the work with a mingled feeling of astonishment, oppression, and perplexity; and Richter stands before us in brilliant cloudy vagueness, a giant mass of intellect, but without form, beauty, or intelligible purpose.[130]

The title of his first novel promises yet another *Bundesroman*, but initially the "secret societies" the narrator cites are facetious ones: a group of kids gathered around a storyteller, a group of adulterers who service an aristocratic woman, even the confederacy of reviewers the author fears will condemn his novel. Only on the final pages are there hints that a secret lodge has been keeping an eye on the novel's young protagonist, Gustav von Falkenberg. What little story there is concerns his upbringing: per his grandmother's insistence, his first eight years are spent underground, accompanied only by his tutor—a young Moravian monk called his Genius—and a poodle. At the end of this period, he is led to believe he dies and is resurrected aboveground in "heaven," with the sun as his visible god.[131] This stupendous chapter paints the earth in paradisaical colors and outdoes all the Romantics in its wide-eyed awe of the natural world, an appreciation

maintained throughout the novel. As Gustav grows up and moves to the capital city of Scheerau, we meet a few more eccentric characters: Dr. Fenk, a satirical physician who keeps life-size wax dummies in his house; Ottomar, the despairingly idealistic, illegitimate son of a prince who is buried alive and undergoes his own resurrection; Oefel, a courtier who is writing a novel about Gustav and sometimes manipulates him to make for a better story; Beata, a modest, storybook virgin with whom Gustav falls in love; and most important, Jean Paul—as he calls himself (and which I will use to distinguish the narrator from Richter the author)—once Beata's tutor and now Gustav's, who is writing the novel as we read it. (It's significant that the novel begins "In my opinion . . .": the novel is more about his opinions than Gustav's life.) Though ostensibly about grooming young Falkenberg for the "invisible lodge" of superior beings like Fenk, Ottomar, and the Moravian Genius, the novel is mostly about Jean Paul's struggle to write the novel (in competition with Oefel and his own hypochondriacal health scares), his struggle to stay on topic, and the reader's struggle to keep up with him. Goethe complained that reading Richter gave him "brain cramps."

That last struggle stems from Richter's maximalist style, a Black Forest of long-winding sentences overgrown with fanciful imagery, convoluted metaphors, learned wit, quirky asides and digressions, scholarly footnotes, and a tendency to gush, to write "with full rapture of soul."[132] The tone modulates from expository to exultant, bantering, sarcastic (especially regarding politics and court life), whimsical, tender, pedantic, confessional, religiose, blasphemous, and occasionally smutty. (In the context of mating, the author notes "women and oarsmen always turn their back to the shore toward which they are seeking to propel themselves" [1].) The author will casually refer to a group of men and horses as "mammalia," and drop images like "under the diving-bell of an intense idea . . . we stand panoplied against the whole outer ocean" (33). At times he writes with admirable if goofy specificity: instead of merely stating that people searched the forest for a boy after he lost his hat, Jean Paul declares: "Every toadstool in the woods was trodden flat and every woodpecker scared away in the effort to find a head for the hat" (6). But often the reader has to hold on to his own

hat to follow the narrator through tortuous, sometimes torturous paths of imagery, as here after one of Oefel's schemes for Gustav fails:

> Oefel stood there dumbfounded gazing after the floating fragments of his wrecked building-plan. It is true, there was still left him this advantage from it all, that he could work the whole shipwreck into his romance, only, however, the Secretary was gone! He had also, not unreasonably, voted him [Gustav] already in advance to the Secretaryship of the Embassy; for the throne of Scheerau has a ladder leaning against it, with the lowest and the highest rungs of honor, but the steps are so near together that one can place his left foot on the lowest rung and yet reach with his right the highest—once indeed we might almost have created an upper field marshal. Secondly, in courts, as in nature, all things hang and join together, and professors might properly call it the cosmological nexus: every one is at once bearer and burden; thus the iron ruler sticks to the magnet, a little ruler to that, to that a needle, and to that steel-filings. At most only what sits upon the throne and what lies down below under it has nexus enough with the efficient company; so in the French opera only the flying gods and the shuffling *beasts* are made of Savoyards, all the rest of the regular company. (24)

How the author gets from a metaphorical blueprint to the cast of a French opera is mystifying, but probably follows a line of thought like this one:

> Slightly, if at all, did Beata notice the approaches of the reigning actor or acting Regent. Oefel, however, saw it, and anticipated his victory over the exalted rival—who made his approaches to him in no very large snail-line, as was his custom with the Court ladies, who only in youth give away their virtue *a la minutta*; in old age, on the contrary, drive a larger business with it *in grosso*. I said just now something about a snail-line because I had in my head a conceit of this kind, that women of the world and the sun, under the appearance of leading the planets in a circle round their rays, in fact hurry them onward in a fine *spiral* (or snail-line) to their burning surface. (37)

This shows there's method to those mad metaphors, and presumably there's one in this passage from a letter by Ottomar, disappointed at life after the promising "morning land" of childhood:

> But there is no other other sunny land of the morning to be found on this optical ball than that one which all our steps can neither *remove* nor *reach*. Ah, ye joys of earth, none of you can do more than satisfy the breast with sighs and the eye with water, and into the poor heart, which opens under your heaven, ye only pour one more wave of blood! And yet these two or three wretched pleasures lame us as poisonous flowers do children who play with them, in arms and limb. Only let there be no music, that mocker of our wishes; do not, at her call, all the fibres of my heart fly asunder and stretch themselves out like so many sucking polypus's arms and tremble with longing and seek to embrace—whom? what? . . . . . An unseen something waiting in other worlds. I often think perhaps it is, after all, nothing; perhaps, after death, all goes on just as now, and thy longings will reach forward out of one heaven toward another—and then I crush under this fantastic nonsense the strings of my harpsichord, as if I would bring a fountain out of them, as if it were not enough that the pressure of this yearning untunes and snaps the thin strings of my inner musical system. (25, author's five-pointed ellipsis)

At times, *The Invisible Lodge* reads like "fantastic nonsense," a fantasia on several themes played on the double-manual harpsichord to which Jean Paul compares his writing in the first sector. The performance is lightened by Jean Paul's playful attitude toward the conventions of fiction. He not only calls chapters "sectors," but after a while begins naming them after church days (Trinity, Epiphany) since he writes only on Sundays, and near the end begins calling them "joys." The subtitles are cryptically amusing: the "Thirty-sixth, or II Advent, Section" announces "Conic Sections of the Bodies of Eminent Persons.—Birthday-Drama.—Rendezvous (or, as Campe Expresses It, 'Make Your Appearance') in the Looking-glass." As Carlyle noted, there are digressions ("Extra Leafs") on a variety of topics, dream sequences that meld into waking reality, and at one point, after Jean Paul moves in with a schoolmaster named Sebastian Wutz, he explains in a footnote that the story of Wutz's father is told in an appendix, which he

wants us to read before continuing with the main text.[133] When Jean Paul takes ill, the novel dwindles to a series of one-paragraph sectors, the plot of the novel abandoned for months as he reports once a week on his various self-diagnoses (suspecting there's a lizard in his stomach, etc.), recovering upon seeing the word *heureusement* (luckily) written in the snow, the sign that Dr. Fenk has arrived. Formally, *The Invisible Lodge* isn't quite as eccentric as *Tristram Shandy*, though for sheer rhetorical fancy it gives it a run for its money, and, like Sterne (who is mentioned at one point), Richter delights in laying bare the devices of fiction, teasing and taunting his reader as he goes along. Novalis thought the novel "extraordinary," but perhaps expresses second thoughts when his Kingsohr advices, "Only a clown makes language leap through hoops, never a poet" (18). But ringmaster Richter has no qualms about doing so and stages an impressive, Cirque du Soleil of a novel, at once weird and whimsical, which he abandoned after more than 400 pages for a bigger, even more impressive "Pantheon-Pandemonium" show.

In *Hesperus, or 45 Dog-Post-Days* (*Hesperus, oder 45 Hundsposttage*, 1795), we learn that Jean Paul has left Scheerau for an island in the Indian Ocean, where one day a Pomeranian dog swims ashore with a gourd around his neck containing family documents and a request from a man named Knef (i.e., Dr. Fenk from the first novel). Impressed by *The Invisible Lodge*, Knef wants Jean Paul to write a similar novel about a group whose activities he will regularly post to the author by way of the dog Spitz. "Anything nonsensical I seldom decline," Jean Paul gamely replies via dog-mail, and accepts the project as long as he can expand on the material with his own satirical observations. Just as the chapters in *The Invisible Lodge* were written only on Sundays, the chapters in *Hesperus* are written only on dog-post-days when the Pomeranian brings the latest details; on days when the mail is late, the author indulges in digressions and arabesques. A sillier metaphor for the process by which a novelist converts life into fiction is hard to imagine, but the results are impressive. *Hesperus* was Germany's best-selling literary novel of 1795, outselling both Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister* and Tieck's *William Lovell* published the same year.

After an eccentric preface, in which the author comments on his *notes* for the preface (discarding four of the seven requests he intended to make of

the reader), Jean Paul introduces a set of characters who are not who they think they are. Victor, the 26-year-old protagonist and court physician to a minor German prince named January, is under the impression he is the son of the English advisor to the prince, Lord Horion, though he is really the son of the court chaplain, a jolly character named Eymann, whose "son" Flamin is actually one of several unknown sons of Prince January, all of whom Horion has kidnapped with republican plans to overthrow the prince. (The novel is set in 1793 amidst the upheavals in next-door France.) Victor and Flamin are the best of friends, but become rivals after falling for the same young woman, a melancholy aristocrat named Clotilda, who is actually Flamin's unknown sister. All this is upstaged by the primary subject of the novel, namely Victor's path of self-discovery, aided by his and Clotilda's mutual teacher (rather, spiritual advisor), an Indian-trained mystic named Emanuel. Victor's moodswings between rapture and sorrow, Clotilda's melancholy and devotion, and Emanuel's visions of eternity are the themes of Jean Paul's titanic symphony of rhetoric: 950 pages of highly figurative language, bizarre metaphors, bookish diction, obscure allusions, satirical digressions, theological speculations, worldly aphorisms, and metafictional flourishes (there are several references to *The Invisible Lodge*, which Victor is reading, and the narrator is kidnapped and becomes part of the plot in the final chapter). In American Charles T. Brooks's 19th-century translation, *Hesperus* reads as though Whitman and Emerson had decided to collaborate on a novel about relationships, democracy, and transcendence, turning it in the process into a metaphor-making contest.

The shadowy plot is swelled by emotional scenes of operatic passion: tearful farewells, tearful reunions—this is what the Japanese would call a very "wet" novel; Clotilda in particular is rarely seen without her cheeks bedewed with tears—declarations of friendship, noble renunciations, ecstatic descriptions of nature, startling revelations, and intimations of immortality. Here, for example, is the orgasmic description of the rhapsody-in-the-rain moment Victor and Clotilda acknowledge their love for each other:

> —Lo, then was the warm cloud emptied into the garden as if it were a whole river of Paradise and on the streams angels playfully floated down, . . . and when bliss could no longer weep and love could no more

> stammer, and when the birds screamed for joy, and the nightingale warbled through the rains, and when the heavens, weeping for joy, fell with cloud-arms on the earth, aye, then two inspired souls met trembling and rushed breathless on each other with quivering lips and cheek pressed to cheek in glowing, trembling ecstasy,—then at last gushed forth, like life-blood out of the swollen heart, great tears of bliss out of the loving eyes over into the loved ones.—The heart measured the eternity of its heaven with great throbs heavy with bliss,—the whole visible universe, the sun itself had sunk away, and only two souls throbbed against each other alone in the emptied, glimmering immensity, dazzled with the glistening of tears and the splendor of sunshine, stunned with the roar of the heavens and the echo of Philomel, and sustained by God in dying of rapture.[134]

And that's a fairly *typical* passage, not an atypical patch of purple prose. As in *The Invisible Lodge*, there is a false resurrection scene in which Emanuel believes he has died and gone to heaven, only to find himself praising rapturously the wonders of *this* world, which Jean Paul wants us to see with eyes anew. The author hits these emotional hot spots regularly, which tends to make reading *Hesperus* a heavy-going, overly rich experience, like subsisting for a week on nothing but strudel.

Two things save the novel from sentimental overload. First, there is the endless stream of imaginative, sometimes outlandish imagery and erudite asides: after a 23-year-old dies giving birth, "the thin, tender twig broke down under the ripe fruit" (2); as the sun sets, "the sun went, softly as a Penn, toward America" (13); both the author and Victor are sometimes attacked "by the vampires of midnight melancholy" (16); Victor compares a powerful politician, "e.g. Pitt—as a Swiss glacier, on which the clouds and dew that nourish it freeze overhead, which oppresses the low places and, in its alternation between melting and congealing, sends out great torrents below, and out of whose clefts corpses are drifted" (17); the pope is "the spiritual washing-machine of whole continents, and can clean souls in bundles in the year of jubilee" (18); Victor succumbs to "the sorrow, which like a rattlesnake, had watched with distended jaws him and his charmed and writhing approaches, now seized and swallowed him and crushed him

to pieces" (25); "This oath which escaped him was magnificent marshmallow-paste and soft ice-cream for the heated court-chaplain" (37); "The speech of his acquaintances, like that of the Chinese, is monosyllabic" (44); contemplating suicide, Victor asks why he should "hold an oar any longer in the slave-ship of life" (44). Unable to hold his ink, Jean Paul relieves himself of every metaphor that occurs to him: reluctant to leave pleasant village life, Victor "was going to be cast out of this softly straying gondola into the slave-ship of the Court,—out of the milk-house of the Parsonage into the princely arsenic-house,—out of the kindergarten of household love into the ice-field of court love" (16). Jean Paul's prose approaches the density of poetry with its high concentration of figurative writing, recalling both the elaborate conceits of 17th-century metaphysical verse and the nature imagery in early Romantic poetry. (I'm tempted to quote side-by-side Wordsworth's 1798 poem "A Night-Piece" and a passage from dog-post-day 31 that begins, "But at last the outspread *night-piece* covered over his hot *fever-images,*" for the resemblances are remarkable.)

The second thing that offers some relief from the emotional excesses of the novel is the irrepressible narrator. Jean Paul is everywhere in the novel, prefacing each chapter with remarks on his mood, interrupting the narrative with off-topic, "extra-leaf" digressions on a variety of matters, complaining about the narrative materials the dog brings him, addressing the reader to confound expectations, flaunting the fictitiousness of his "biography" (as he calls the novel), launching preemptive strikes against reviewers (with whom he has a Marksonian obsession[135]), even joining the cast of characters near the end, all so that the reader never forgets that *Hesperus* is Jean Paul's imaginative take on certain events, not a reliable account of them. He agrees to tell a story, but in a "New Concordate with the Reader" inserted early on, he informs us he also plans to "let off the motliest fireworks of wit, yes, [so] that chains of philosophical conclusions should hang down in skeins out of my mouth like ribbons from a juggler's" (6). Jean Paul compared *The Invisible Lodge* to playing a harpsichord; here, he complains that each new character he must introduce "is a new organ-stop drawn out, which I have to take into my performance" (8), a grander instrument offering a greater number of voices and timbres. (Better yet is Jean Paul's later comparison of himself to "Maelzel's great Panharmonicon" [36, 4th

preface], a prototype of the synthesizer.) It's quite a performance, offering fireworks and ribbons for the intelligentsia, sentiments and ideals for general readers, and despite (or because of) its eccentricity, *Hesperus* made Richter a star.

Before it appeared, Richter wrote a shorter novel entitled *Life of Quintus Fixlein* (1796); if *Hesperus* recalls *The Invisible Lodge* in many respects, *Quintus Fixlein* recalls the "idyll" about schoolmaster Wutz appended to the *Lodge.* Set between 1791 and 1794, the novel recounts the accidental promotion of a village schoolmaster to pastor of his hometown and his marriage to an old sweetheart—yet another sorrowful virgin. ("Quintus" is the title of a fifth-grade teacher, not a personal name.) Jean Paul attends Fixlein's investiture, befriends him, and with his permission writes his biography based on memorabilia kept in Fixlein's filing cabinets. (The 15 chapters are called "filing cabinets," or "letter-boxes" in Carlyle's old translation, from which I'll be quoting.) There's some dramatic tension as Fixlein worries he'll die at age 32–many of Richter's characters, and Richter himself, believe they'll die at a certain time–but otherwise the novel is a quaintly charming idyll set in a Bavarian village: comfort food, no doubt, for its first readers during a decade of political chaos. If *The Invisible Lodge* is a harpsichord and *Hesperus* a church organ, *Quintus Fixlein* is a soothing Æolian harp in a parsonage window.

Aside from a few digressions and footnotes, it is more conventional than Richter's previous novels, though the style remains the same. Here's Jean Paul's legalistic account of a schoolboy prank:

> The Quintus related, perhaps with a too pleasurable enjoyment of the recollection, how one of this famishing *coro* [chorus] invented means of appropriating the Professor's hens as just tribute, or subsidies. He said (he was a Jurist) they must once for all borrow a legal fiction from the Feudal code and look on the Professor as the soccage tenant, to whom the usufruct of the hen-yard and hen-house belonged, but on themselves as the feudal superiors of the same, to whom accordingly the vassal was bound to pay his feudal dues. And now that the Fiction might follow Nature, continued he—*fictio sequitur naturam*—it behooved them to lay hold of said Yule-hens by direct personal distraint. But into the courtyard there was no getting. The feudalist therefore prepared a fishing-line,

> stuck a bread-pill on the hook, and lowered his fishing-tackle, anglerwise, down into the court. In a few seconds the barb stuck in a hen's throat, and the hen now communicating with its feudal superior, could silently, like ships by Archimedes, be heaved aloft to the hungry air-fishing society, where, according to circumstances, the proper feudal name and title of possession failed not to be awaiting her: for the updrawn fowls were now denominated Christmas-fowls, now Forest-hens, Bailiff-hens, Pentecost and Summer-hens. "I begin," said the angling lord of the manor, "with taking *Rutcher-dues*, for so we call the triple and quintuple of the original quit-rent when the vassal, as is the case here, has long neglected payment." The Professor, like any other prince, observed with sorrow the decreasing population of his hen-yard, for his subjects, like the Hebrews, were dying by enumeration. At last he had the happiness, while reading his lecture—he was just come to the subject of *Forest Salt and Coin Regalities*—to descry through the window of his auditorium a quit-rent hen suspended, like Ignatius Loyola in prayer or Juno in her punishment, in middle air: he followed the incomprehensible direct ascension of the aeronautic animal, and at last descried at the upper window the attracting artist, the animal-magnetiser, who had drawn his lot for dinner from the hen-yard below. Contrary to all expectations, he terminated this fowling sport sooner than his Lecture on Regalities. (First Letter-Box)

Tom Sawyer it ain't. For the hanging of a new church bell, Jean Paul attempts to restrain his verbosity and adopt "that simple historical style of the Ancients," but after two pages he exclaims, "By heaven! the unadorned style is here a thing beyond my power," and immediately unfurls longer sentences, punctuated by dashes, and raisined with adjectives, poetic flourishes, and words like "metamorphotic" (Twelfth Letter-Box). As in all of Richter's novels, the teller makes himself more important than the tale, and *Quintus Fixlein* offers another metafictional example of Richter's treatment of the novel as a performance space.

Richter brought back all the bells and whistles for his next novel, beginning with its eccentric title: *Flower-, Fruit-, and Thorn-Pieces; or, The Married Life, Death, and Wedding of the Advocate of the Poor, Firmian Siebenkäs (A Genuine Thorn-Piece)* (*Blumen- Frucht- und Dornenstücke;*

oder Ehestand, Tod und Hochzeit des Armenadvokaten F. St. Siebenkäs, 1796–97). A glance at its 5-page table of contents promises Richter's most Sternean novel yet (indeed, a character is reading *Tristram Shandy* in one chapter): after a preface (more a frame tale), the 4-book novel is divided into 25 chapters (thus called, for once), appendices to chapters, further prefaces clumped together (including an all-purpose one offered to other authors), two "flower-pieces" (dream sequences), and a "fruit-piece" (an essayistic letter by Victor from *Hesperus*). Not noted on the contents pages are other "extra-leaflets" and digressions scattered throughout the 600-page novel.

Nevertheless, *Siebenkäs* is fairly straightforward, in style as well as content. It features a small-town lawyer and part-time author who marries a simple Lutheran lass named Lenette, then almost immediately realizes he made a mistake. Firmian Siebenkäs (his surname means "Seven Cheeses"—no clue why) is highly educated, unconventional, and scornful of public opinion, while she's just the opposite. Working out of his garret while Lenette obsesses over household matters, they drive each other crazy in countless little ways; this is not only one of the earliest novels in literary history to depict married life, but one of the first to focus on the little things: the pouting silences, the petty power plays, the mutual misunderstandings, the offenses taken when none were intended—all conveyed with kitchen-sink realism and psychological acumen. Poverty exacerbates the tension, partly the result of an inheritance that Siebenkäs lost due to a technicality exploited by his evil guardian. After a year of this, feeling sorrier for Lenette than for himself, Siebenkäs decides to end it all by faking his death, a scheme arranged by Heinrich Leibgeber, his close friend and doppelgänger (a term coined by Richter), who has arranged for Siebenkäs to take over his own life—they look almost identical—and who has introduced him to an intelligent woman who is better suited to Siebenkäs than Lenette was. (Her name is Natalie; she's cut from the same noble cloth as Beata and Clotilda, and falls for Siebenkäs rather quickly.) In yet another example of the false death/resurrection topos Richter loved, Siebenkäs "dies" to his old life—a blackly humorous scene—and starts a new one, as does Lenette after she marries a more suitable (i.e., conventional) man. Reluctant to propose to Natalie in case she should discover he is still technically married, miserable Siebenkäs is tempted to

end his life for real until he returns to his hometown and learns that Lenette has died in childbirth, discovers Natalie there weeping over Siebenkäs's grave, then reveals himself and spills the whole story. Like an old-fashioned Hollywood ending—one can almost hear an orchestra rising behind them—Siebenkäs and Natalie declare their undying love for each other.

Siebenkäs may be Richter's most accessible, most captivating novel for several reasons. It deals with more mundane matters than his earlier, metaphysical ones—scenes from a marriage, encounters with the neighbors, money problems, legal hassles, an exciting shooting match—and dramatizes the common tragedy of allowing petty squabbles to obscure one's appreciation for others until they're gone, played out during the novel's many death scenes, real and faked. Too, Richter reins in his flamboyant style somewhat, cutting back on the gush and complex metaphors without sacrificing his distinctive style. There is careful use of insect imagery throughout, beginning on the second page of chapter 1 with the fanciful statement "Siebenkæs's butterfly-proboscis, however, found plenty of open honey cells in every blue thistle-blossom of his fate," and concluding in the final chapter as Natalie sets "a mourning-cloak butterfly (disabled by the night dew) down upon her lap."[136] The reader continues to be blindsided by unexpected tropes and witty phrases—of a dandy, "everything about him salted the women of the house into Lottish salt-pillars" (3)—and Jean Paul's images are scientifically au courant: he is undoubtedly the first (and perhaps last) to compare an angry woman's eyes to "Volta's electric condensers" (17). He also seems to have predicted global warming, commenting sarcastically, "Nowadays, when forests are burned to charcoal faster than they grow again, the only thing to be done is to warm *the climate* a good deal and turn it into a great brooding-oven, kiln, and field-oven, so as to save the trouble, and obviate the necessity, of having stoves in the houses" (20, his italics).

But Richter gives full rein to his fancy in the two "flower-pieces" in the middle of the novel, which originally came at the beginning but were moved in the revised edition of 1817–18. In the first dream, "The Dead Christ Proclaims There Is No God"—it's difficult to imagine any novelist before Dostoevsky daring to include such an interlude in a novel—Jesus describes the universe without a heavenly father: "The whole spiritual

universe is shattered and shivered by the hand of Atheism into innumerable glittering quicksilver globules of individual personalities, running hither and thither at random, coalescing and parting asunder without unity, coherence, or consistency." Reeling from this nihilistic vision of eternity, the dreamer then offers "A Dream within a Dream," in which a loveless universe without a father is filled by the universal love of the goddess Mary —both visions affirming the psychological bases of gods and goddesses in idealized parental figures. (As wise Natalie says on the final page of the novel, "eternity is here on earth.") It's hard to say whether the "I" who narrates these dreams is Siebenkäs or Jean Paul, who, as usual, is both the author and a participant in the work. The dreams may be Siebenkäs's rebuttal to Lenette's suspicion that he is an atheist, which is not true (a nonconformist yes, but not an atheist); or they may be two more chapters in the book he is writing, *Selections from the Devil's Papers*—the same book Richter published pseudonymously in 1789. (The novel is set between June 1785 and August 1787.) If the latter, it would be one more metafictional element in the novel, for as in his earlier works, Jean Paul is very much present in the novel, commenting on its progress, never letting the reader forget this is a fiction (that is, a biography, based on materials supplied by Siebenkäs himself), even touting his work in progress, *Titan.*

Like *Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship*, much of *Siebenkäs* reads like a mid-19th-century novel—something by George Meredith, say—not a late-18th-century one, which is probably why it wasn't as popular as *Hesperus*. (Coincidentally, both Goethe and Richter gave the name Natalie to their protagonists' ideal love.) Timothy Casey speculates its bourgeois realism is what made it "one of his least acceptable works to his contemporaries, with dubious morality regarding marriage and, still worse, money" (*Jean Paul: A Reader*, 19). Middling-class readers probably took exception to being mocked in the persons of small-minded Lenette and her second husband, and probably had as much trouble following the satirical/philosophical conversations of Siebenkäs and the eccentric Leibgeber as Lenette did. This "genuine thorn-piece," as the subtitle dubs it, raised too many prickly questions about matters readers did not expect to encounter in a novel at that time. Modern readers, more accustomed to being pricked than coddled by novels, would undoubtedly join me in finding it to be Richter's most stimulating fiction, the most deserving of a new edition. In Thomas

Bernhard's last novel, *Extinction* (1986), *Siebenkäs* is one of the few German novels the protagonist gives to his Italian pupil to study, regarding it as a revolutionary work that will "alienat[e] him from his parents and their ideas" as it did from his own (104).

In one of the mid-book prefaces in *Siebenkäs* (dated 5 June 1796), archly pretending that novel was written by someone else, Jean Paul acknowledges its limited scope:

> Happy as the author would have been to have thundered, stormed, and poured in it, there was of course no room in a parish advocate's lodgings for Rhine cataracts, thunderstorms, tropical hurricanes (of tropes) or waterspouts, and he has had to reserve his more terrific tornadoes for a future work. I have his permission to mention the name of this future work; it is the *Titan*. In this work he means to be an absolute Hecla[137] and shatter the ice of his country (and himself into the bargain) to pieces; like the volcanoes in Iceland, he will spout up a column of boiling water four feet in diameter to a height of eighty-nine or ninety feet in the air, and that at such a temperature that when this wet fire pillar falls down again and flows into the book shops, it will still be warm enough to boil eggs or their mother soft.

Titan (1800–3) is Richter's longest, most ambitious novel. He worked on it throughout the 1790s, during and between his other novels, and intended it to be not only his last novel of the 18th century but his most titanic effort (one meaning of the title), "a book as large as the world, which would be the world itself" (11). The main text is 1,043 pages long in Charles T. Brooks's translation ("almost flawless" in one critic's estimation [Berger, 164]), and consists of 35 long chapters called "jubilees" subdivided into 147 subsections called "cycles."[138] Typically, the "Introductory Programme to *Titan*" appears not upfront but at the end of cycle 9 (during which we learn that Jean Paul, once again, is working up his "biography" from materials supplied to him from someone else). The digressions and arabesques that usually adorn a Richter novel were published separately in the two-volume *Comic Appendix to Titan* (1800–1801), which itself had an appendix, the *Clavis Fichtiana* (1800), written by one of the characters in

Titan. Jean Paul even suggests reviews of the novel should be considered comic appendices to *Titan*!

Richter explores the problematic nature of ambition and identity among several "titanic" characters "longing for heights" (12): high hopes, heightened emotions, and high stations. (Images of giganticism dominate the novel.) Twenty years before *Titan* begins, an ambitious Spaniard named Gaspard de Cesara, thwarted in his ambition to marry into German nobility, agreed to a proposal by the princess of Hohenfliess to raise her son Albano as though he were his own, thereby protecting him from the machinations of the rival principality of Haarhaar. Gaspard's plan is to have Albano eventually marry his own daughter Linda and thereby achieve his royal ambition. The bulk of the novel takes place after Albano's 21st birthday in the early 1790s: now a man, he is uncertain what to do with his own titanic ambitions, and toys with the idea of going off to fight in the French Revolution. He is attached to the court of Hohenfliess without knowing he is the heir to the throne (currently occupied by his ailing older brother Luigi) and is surrounded by other larger-than-life characters: Charles Roquairol, a "suicidal madcap" who at age 13 had played Werther in a dramatic adaption of Goethe's novel and shot himself on stage (he survived, but will successfully stage a similar suicide later in the novel); Albano's two tutors, an architect named Dian and an antic, "electric-sparkling" character named Schoppe; and a saintly girl named Liana, daughter of the prime minister and Roquairol's sister. Albano falls in love with her, and she reciprocates until she learns his true identity and decides she's not good enough for a future prince. She conveniently dies, after which Albano travels to Italy and reencounters Linda—a proud, stately woman—and falls in love with her. (He learns she's not his real sister, but not the rest of the secret of his birth.) Jealous of them both after they return to Germany, Roquairol seduces Linda by impersonating Albano one night, then kills himself the following night during a play he wrote that dramatizes the seduction. (The author compares it to the play within *Hamlet*, beating commentators to the punch.) For all her independence, Linda is such a slave to decorum that she now considers herself Roquairol's "widow" and withdraws from the scene, leaving it open for the third and final girl Albano falls for, a dead ringer for Liana named Idione (of the royal family of Haarhaar), who is just as saintly as her nunnish predecessor but more

practical. At the death of Prince Luigi at the end of the novel, Albano learns of his parentage, and decides that he will focus his previously vague ambitions on becoming a model prince, with Idione as his queen.

Or something like that. It's difficult to untangle the story—a dozen minor characters complicate things further—because few characters are who they think they are, and/or who they pretend to be, a state of confusion the reader shares much of the time. Jean Paul underscores the instability of identity with false relationships, faux twins, deceptive wax images and portraits, impersonators and ventriloquists, distorting mirrors, phony apparitions, and doppelgängers. Some of these impersonations are staged to keep Albano in the dark—there are supernatural hoaxes straight out of the horror novels of the time—but other instances of identity confusion seem to have philosophical implications. In the most extreme case, that of Albano's sardonic friend Schoppe, there's a dramatization of the philosopher Johann Fichte's theory of the ego whereby Schoppe develops schizophrenia and (apparently) generates his own double: Siebenkäs from Richter's last novel, who takes Schoppe's place as Albano's tutor after he dies. (It is Schoppe/Siebenkäs who writes the *Clavis Fichtiana* [Key to Fichte], a satire on Fichte's philosophy and German idealism in general.) Over the course of the novel, Schoppe evolves from a witty Mercutio figure to a frantic Hamlet, his words wild and whirling; he is a great admirer of Swift, whom he follows into madness. Like the other principals, he is a "titan": "The earth-ball, and all the earthly stuff out of which the fleeting worlds are formed, was indeed far too small and light for thee," the narrator eulogizes. "For thou soughtest behind, beneath, and beyond life, something higher than life" (139). The Faust theme is evoked here, as well as Voltaire's recommendation that it may be better just to cultivate one's garden, which is in a sense what Albano decides at the end.

Like the Titans of Greek mythology, to whom Jean Paul often refers, his principal characters suffer from overly enthusiastic, sometimes self-destructive energies, an unfocused passion for greatness, a yearning for ideals, a Faustian desire to exceed the boundaries of knowledge—unrealistic ideas that Jean Paul blames on other authors: "When Charles [Roquairol] conjured before him tragic storm-clouds from Shakespeare, Goethe, Klinger, Schiller, and life saw itself colossally represented in the poetic magnifying mirror, then did all the sleeping giants of his inner world

rise up" (54). His female characters too often have their noses in a hymnal or a romance, giving them similar unrealistic notions. All of Richter's titans have difficulty reconciling idealism and imagination with reality; such concepts are fine in works of art (and necessary to *produce* works of art), but can be dangerous in real life. Later, Roquairol gives Albano advice that doubles as Jean Paul's judgment on titanic characters (and recalls Wieland's criticism of enthusiasts):

> only lift thy head higher out of the hot waves of the feelings, then wilt thou no longer lose thyself in them, but let them billow on alone. There is a cold, daring spirit in man, which nothing touches at all—not even virtue; for it alone chooses that, and is its creator, not its creature. I once experienced at sea a storm, in which the whole element furiously and jaggedly and foamingly lashed itself into commotion, and flung its waters pell-mell through each other, while overhead the sun looked on in silence;—so be thou! The heart is the storm; self is the heaven. (88)

For a while Albano continues to yearn for big actions, but by the end of the novel he achieves something of the solar equanimity his hotheaded friend failed to find. For this reason, Richter told a friend the title of the novel really should be *Anti-Titan*.

Compounding the reader's difficulty with the novel is Jean Paul's highly figurative language, so metaphoric at times that one is left with only a vague sense of what is happening. There's much to praise: the style is suitably grandiose, the nature descriptions are stupendous, and there is careful use of musical imagery in his symphonic prose.[139] (Albano plays the harpsichord, Liana the glass harmonica, and bold Linda is associated with the trumpet.) *Titan* often reads like Hölderlin's *Hyperion* and seems to answer Schlegel's call for poetic prose.[140] But too often the writing is bloated and blustery, reaching too often for the sublime, more icing than cake. Many of the allusions are obscure, much of the wit is ponderous.[141] The novel is quite sentimental at times, ickily so when dealing with religiose maidens like Liana and Idione, and I suspect Richter wrote the main novel for his female readers and saved the more outrageous, satirical stuff for the *Comic Appendix*, which seems aimed at male readers. About

these I can't say much, for Brooks did not include them in his translation and only a few selections have been translated into English (in the Caseys's *Jean Paul: A Reader*, 210–35). Conceptually, a separately published appendix to the novel is intriguing. The first part is a fictitious magazine with 31 essays by characters from Richter's previous novels (Victor, Dr. Fenk, Siebenkäs) along with many by Jean Paul, and concludes with the preface to *Titan*.[142] The second part of the *Comic Appendix*, Blackall explains, consists of

> "Des Luftschiffers Giannozzo Seebuch" [Giannozzo the Aeronaut's Seabook (i.e., Logbook)]. This travelogue by a balloonist who levitates above the earth because of his distaste for it is the diary of an idealist who scorns the vanity, hypocrisy, injustice, and folly of the world, exulting in his lonely superiority, only to find one day that he cannot descend, as he has regularly done, and crashing to death in the Swiss mountains. It is "comic" only because of the series of satires that it contains. It is an obverse to the story of Albano, with which it forms a sort of double-novel, a typically romantic form in that each reflects on the other. (*The Novels of the German Romantics*, 86–87)

And the appendix to this *Appendix*, as stated earlier, is Schoppe/Siebenkäs's comic critique of Fichte's philosophy, which in the novel has driven him mad (see cycle 139).[143] Thus the instability of identity that many of *Titan*'s characters experience is formally mirrored by the relationship between the novel proper and its appendices: is *Titan* a sentimental education or a philosophical satire? Perhaps Richter couldn't decide between writing a *Tristram Shandy* filled with comic interpolations (as in *Siebenkäs*) or a *Wilhelm Meister* that would keep the focus on the development of his protagonist, and thus schizophrenically divided his novel in two. Either way, it further complicates this ambitious work.

Indeed, *Titan* is the most ambitious German novel of the 18th century, but it is not Richter's most compelling one. It repeats too many character types and situations from his first two novels: Albano is cut from the same noble cloth as Gustav and Victor; the angelic maidens recall Beata and Clotilda; and Jean Paul's negative view of court life remains unchanged. As in the

earlier novels, there is an admirable hermit, a symbolic death-and-resurrection scene, and near-homoerotic expressions of friendship between young men. If this is the first Richter novel you read, it might be more appealing, but if read on the heels of his others, it's more of the same. (I'm probably suffering from Richter-fatigue: I love his approach to fiction—Heil Richter!—but marching through 3,000 pages of it nonstop is inadvisable.) The author sensed he was asking a lot of his readers: although he cheerfully invites us to "dance along together into the book—into this free ball of the world—I first as leader in the dance, and then the readers as hop-dancers after me" (9), he's hard to follow. Soon we feel like Albano: "This noble youth trembled at the complicated plot" (52). "But here the history moves in veils!" (80), as it often does due to Jean Paul's imaginative but often obfuscatory prose, and ultimately the novel resembles Gaspard's travel account, "which seemed uncommonly acute, fantastical, learned, incredible, and oft really unintelligible" (106). If this is Richter's metafictional evaluation of *Titan*, most of his critics agree.

Richter continued to write a few more idiosyncratic novels—one of them, *Army Chaplain Schmelzle's Journey to Flaetz* (1809), features randomly numbered footnotes that have no apparent relation to the main text—but he peaked with *Titan*, which, for all its shortcomings, represents the pinnacle of progress German novelists had reached by the end of the 18th century: for roughly the first two-thirds of the century, the French and English dominated the genre, but during the last third, no one in the world produced a more impressive body of fiction than the Germans.

LATIN FICTION

Even though the novel is almost by definition a vernacular genre, there were those in the early modern period who decided to write not in their native tongues but in the lingua franca of the educated classes: what is now called Neo-Latin. Since the only two extant Latin novels from Roman times —Petronius's *Satyricon* (c. 60) and Apuleius's *Golden Ass* (c. 160)—were erudite satires, those of a satirical bent felt it was appropriate to write in Latin, especially with more recent examples such as Alberti's *Momus* (1450), Erasmus's *Praise of Folly* (1508), and More's *Utopia* (1516) on

their bookshelves. A few fiction writers chose Latin because they didn't want to attract *too* much attention, especially those producing heretical or pornographic works, or because they felt their writings were too subtle for "the less instructed portion of the community," as one of them put it.[144] Ironically, some chose Latin in a bid for permanence and universality by using a language that had been in use for over 2,000 years and familiar to almost every well-educated person in the western hemisphere, unaware that very choice would lead them not to Parnassus but to oblivion.

For example, had Scotsman John Barclay (1582–1621) written in English instead of Latin, he would probably be regarded as one of the most important English novelists of the 17th century, and his two novels possibly available today as Penguin Classics instead of as prohibitively expensive scholarly editions published in Holland. His first novel, written in his early twenties, acknowledges its model in its title: *Euphormio's Satyricon* (*Euphormionis Lusinini Satyricon*, 1605–7). Like Petronius's novel, it is a satire of contemporary society, though Barclay complicates his *Satyricon* by adding a layer of allegory. The first-person story of a young man who leaves his utopian country of Lusinia to see the world, only to be fleeced by sharpers and lawyers, made a slave, recruited by religious leaders, and outraged at the corruption he sees in such places as Ilium, Alexandria, and Thebes, seems to be taking place during the classical era. (If taken literally, one reference would set the novel in the late 2nd century bce, while another would place it near the end of the 1st century ce.) However, Barclay's earliest readers easily saw through this veil and recognized his satirical targets as the Jesuits of French Lorraine (where Barclay was educated), various kings and aristocrats at the courts of Europe, the current pope, and the Puritans of "Scolimorrhodia" (Scotland + England). Using allegory to defamiliarize these familiar figures and current events, Barclay revealed them in a new, unflattering light. Some early critics were quick to supply a "key" to the novel, making *Euphormio's Satyricon* the first deliberate roman à clef in literature.

In many ways, Barclay's novel resembles a picaresque, though this is by accident, not by design, for even though the first two Spanish picaresques had been translated into French by his time, there's no evidence Barclay knew them. Like the protagonist of *Lazarillo of Tormes*, Euphormio tells his

story from a later, more comfortable vantage point, explaining how he was cheated, misled, and exploited by various people until he wised up, educated himself, and eventually found a patron in King Tessaranactus of Scolimorrhodia (i.e., King James I of Great Britain). Although the reader commiserates with Euphormio's misfortunes, we can't help but notice his self-aggrandizing habit of comparing his setbacks with the loftiest tragedies of classical mythology, his self-pitying conviction that the gods are out to get him, and his pedantic habit of showing off his new-minted education with hundreds of erudite references culled from the works of Pliny, Plutarch, Livy, Athenaeus, and others. Like the protagonist of Alemán's *Guzman of Alfarache*, Euphormio seems to be putting on an act rather than making a true confession, and is a little too obsequious in his sucking up to King Tessaranactus. (Part 1 of the novel begins with an unctuous dedicatory epistle to James I, from whom Barclay hoped to win a court appointment.) And as in the best picaresques, Euphormio grows up as his novel progresses: in part 1 he blames others for his problems, but in part 2 he begins blaming himself for allowing those problems to happen. Aesthetically, the novel grows up too; part 1 rambles, whereas part 2 is much better focused.

Euphormio's Satyricon is a prime example of Menippean satire, which Barclay's translator David Fleming defines as "a fictional mixture of prose and verse characterized by heterogeneity, lightness of tone, erudition, and the excoriation of vice" (xvi). Barclay's tone is a little darker than Petronius's, and certainly more chaste—no homosexuality or "ritual buttocking-thumping" here, just a guilty act of adultery and a young Puritaness with eyes that "tingled with a slightly melancholy sauciness" (2.31)—but otherwise the novel offers a variety of diversions. The text is peppered with poems by Euphormio and others, learned wordplay, occult stories, a précis of an allegorical play dramatizing the revolt of the Netherlands against the Spanish, and—best of all—a fable about criticism: in book 2, a young artist displays his allegorical portrait of a modest lady in a purple mantle, flanked on one side by some who adore her and on the other by some who disdain her. A would-be critic delivers a lengthy argument claiming the woman represents the study of jurisprudence (which the Jesuits disdained); then Euphormio steps up and insists the woman represents the arts and sciences, especially literature, meaning "a lively

description of the affections of one's own age" (2.23), such as Barclay is writing. After Euphormio concludes his critique "with tremendous flourish," the young artist smiles and says the lady represents a large wine cask, appealing to drinkers but not to teetotalers. "Everyone burst out in laughter" (2.24).

Like the young man's painting, young Barclay's novel can be read in many ways: as a satirical, transhistorical allegory of current events; as a bildungsroman; an attempt to adapt Petronius's method to modern literature; and/or a flexing of Barclay's literary muscles, showing off what he had learned during his education under the Jesuits and biting the hand that fed him that knowledge. (Some first novelists write about what they know, others about what they've read.) It's a portrait of the artist as a young man, and a summary of what he had learned about the world by his mid-twenties, especially regarding religion:

> I considered it all at great remove—both what I had just seen in the household of Catharinus [a Puritan] and what I had once known among the Acignians [Jesuits], as well as whatever I had learned from the priests of various religions. I was filled with bitter pain, for I realized that the contentiousness of mortal men commits as many abuses in divine ceremonies as in human conflicts. People are driven to great lengths by vain zeal and cruel curses, and yet they blame one another for their lack of charity. The learned are propelled by ambition and the powerful by factiousness; as for the weak, they merely follow authority, either that of a doctrine or that of the more powerful forces [. . . :] an education impressed on them by their parents, or by the attitude of their race, or by some enthusiasm without rational basis[.] How few are led by the decision of a mature mind! And yet we battle one another in these hatreds; you can easily see that everyone thinks himself wise. O proud mortality! O merciless ingenuity of superstition! (2.31)

Set in the classical era, written at the beginning of the 17th century, *Euphormio's Satyricon* unfortunately describes our world as accurately as Barclay's own.

Translator Fleming claims that, "With the single exception of *Don Quijote*, there can be little doubt that John Barclay's *Euphormionis Lusinini*

Satyricon was the most important work of prose fiction published in Europe in the first decade of the seventeenth century" (ix). A champion of d'Urfé's *Astrea* would object, but it's true that 40 or so editions of the Latin original appeared between 1605 and 1773, along with French, Dutch, and German translations, some Latin continuations, and a few imitations (*Misoponeri Satyricon* [1617] and François Guyet's *Gaeomemphionis Cantaliensis Satyricon* [1628]). Yet even more popular, and even more widely translated, was Barclay's other novel, *Argenis* (1621). This time his literary model was Heliodorus's *Ethiopian Story*, the same ancient Greek novel that inspired Cervantes' last romance.[145] Formally, Barclay's novel is simpler—it unfolds in a linear fashion, with only a few flashbacks, unlike the Greek's more convoluted fiction—but thematically it is more complicated because Barclay intended it to work on three levels simultaneously.

Primarily, it's a faux Greek romance (though twice the length of the originals) detailing the travails of a noble couple named Poliarchus, prince of a kingdom in Gaul, and Argenis, daughter of King Meleander of Sicily and heir to his throne. They are secretly engaged, but the sterling Argenis attracts three other suitors: a Sicilian rebel named Lycogenes, eager to overthrow the king to get his hands on the princess; a prince wandering incognito named Archombrotus, who visits Sicily, falls in love with Argenis, and helps suppress Lycogenes' rebellion; and a prince of Sardinia named Radirobanes, who also helps defeat Lycogenes in the hope of marrying Argenis. But she has eyes only for Poliarchus, who won her heart after disguising himself as a girl to join her entourage, then foiled an attempt on the king's life: beating off a gang of assassins while still dressed as a girl, he is mistaken for the goddess Pallas by the grateful but befuddled king, who appoints his daughter Argenis as "her" priestess, much to the couple's private delight. The elaborate plot also involves Poliarchus's backstory in Gaul (kidnapped as a youth) and some adventures in nearby Mauritania—ruled by a queen who later turns out to be Archombrotus's mother—where a thrilling battle occurs featuring maddened elephants and a fight to the death between Poliarchus and Radirobanes. As in most Greek romances, there are shipwrecks and pirates, disguises and betrayals, and coincidences and surprising revelations at the end that resolve the rivalry between Poliarchus and Archombrotus. The novel begins with the latter

saving Poliarchus's life, the middle concerns their rivalry, and the conclusion reconciles them; *Argenis* is more about them than about the rather colorless princess, as bland as her generic name. ("Argenis" is a near anagram for *regina*, which can mean "princess" as well as "queen.") Unlike *Euphormio's Satyricon*, Barclay pays closer attention to the historical setting (the 1st century ce, per one datable reference), avoiding anachronisms and successfully demonstrating the enduring appeal of the Grecian formula for romantic-adventure fiction.

Secondarily, *Argenis* is a political treatise that uses the Greek novel as a delivery system for the author's promonarchy views. Barclay the romance novelist claims that Argenis "was the cause of all these troubles" in the novel;[146] but Barclay the diplomat and courtier clearly places the blame on weak King Meleander. His vacillating indecision leads him to attempt a reconciliation with Lycogenes rather than crush him, and virtually all of the other conflicts in the novel can be blamed on his lack of leadership. This is clear enough even at the romance level of the novel, but Barclay underscores (even belabors) the point by inserting a couple of dozen discourses on governance and other matters throughout the novel. (In this regard, he melds the Greek novel with Menippean satire because of the latter's capacity for such digressions, and for poetry: there are dozens of poems in the novel as well, celebrating certain events and commenting on others like a Greek chorus.) Barclay believed in a strong, almost dictatorial monarchy, and while his views will have little appeal to modern readers, they were vital issues in his day and broadened the appeal of his novel beyond female readers (the primary consumers of romances) to male readers, especially those in high places who previously wouldn't have been caught dead reading a novel.

Barclay felt he was creating a new genre, the political romance. In his dedicatory epistle, he refers to "this new genre of fiction, not perhaps hitherto seen among Latin writers," and metafictionally stakes his claim for originality within the novel via a character named Nicopompos, a member of Meleander's court. Early on, frustrated by both the rebels and the king's unwillingness to put them down, Nicopompus vows to oppose them not with a sword but a "sharp stylus," and use it "to fight against the offenders and take revenge on them" (2.14). Knowing that children take their bitter

medicine only if sweetened, Nicopompus says he will deliver his bitter criticism in the form of an exciting story; asked by his friends to elaborate on "this neat invention," he replies:

> I will compile some stately fable in manner of a history. In it will I fold up strange events and mingle together arms, marriages, bloodshed, mirth, with many and various successes. The readers will be delighted with the vanities there shown incident to mortal men. And I shall have them more willing to read me when they shall not find me severe or giving precepts. I will feed their minds with diverse contemplations and, as it were, with a map of places. . . . I know the disposition of our countrymen: because I seem to tell them tales, I shall have them all. They will love my book above any stage-play or spectacle on the theatre. So first bringing them in love by a potion, I will after put in some wholesome herbs. (2.14)

Unfazed by Nicopompus's condescension, one of his friends is "much taken with this new kind of writing" and predicts: "Such a book would wear out many ages and make its author glorious to all posterity, besides the infinite profit in laying open and confounding the frauds and practices of the wicked and arming honesty against them" (2.14). Nicopompus calls "for paper and even then began his most useful and delightful story"; this passage occurs about a third of the way into the book, and thereafter the reader is occasionally reminded that s/he is reading a novel by a character in a novel, a "neat invention" indeed and reminiscent of the metafictional quality of *Don Quixote*.

The third level on which *Argenis* weaves its silvery web, and the one least relevant to modern readers, is that of allegory. Political junkies of the 1620s were quick to see coded references to Henry III of France (= Sicily), Elizabeth I of England (= Mauritania), John Calvin and his Huguenots (= Usincula and his Hyperephanii), the future Pope Urban VIII (= Ibburranes), and to other minor characters and scandals of the time. What is admirable is not the accuracy of these allegorical figures, for historians now question how closely Barclay intended his characters to match their historical counterparts, but the invisibility of the allegory. In the more blatantly allegorical *Euphormio's Satyricon*, the reader can't help but suspect its characters and situations are allegorical, and the efficacy of Barclay's satire

is dependent upon knowing the referents. But in *Argenis*, the plot and characters are so organically united that the reader not only doesn't suspect Barclay is writing a roman à clef about European politics between circa 1580 and 1620, but doesn't much care. We're struck instead by the universality of Barclay's informed observations about realpolitik, whether in the 1st century, the 17th, or the 21st. With a little ingenuity, one could find contemporary counterparts to his Greek/Renaissance political animals, reminding us that, *mutatis mutandis*, it's always been politics as usual.

In addition to being among the most popular novels of the 17th century, *Euphormio's Satyricon* and *Argenis* were two of the most influential. By retooling the ancient novel as a vehicle for modern political commentary, Barclay created a "new kind of writing" that inspired novelists throughout Europe. Spain's Baltasar Gracián acknowledges in the introduction to *The Master Critic* that Barclay's *Satyricon* was one of his models. (Isla read it, but he mocks Barclay's Latin in *Friar Gerund*.) In France, where *Argenis* was especially popular (in translation as well as in Latin: the original was published in Paris), it was *the* major inspiration for the *roman héroïque*: enormous romantic-adventure novels usually set in ancient times but reflecting current events. In Germany, the confluence of Barclay's *Argenis* (translated by Martin Opitz in 1626) and the French *roman héroïque* led to the baroque novels by Buchholtz, Lohenstein, and others noted earlier in this chapter. *Argenis* provided the pattern used by English novelists who wanted to allegorically dramatize their Civil War, replicated in a half dozen "political romances" published in the 1650s and '60s. It must be admitted that no one reads any of these novels anymore, except for scholars; for their first readers, it must have been a thrilling novelty to read about current kings and politicians wearing togas, swearing by the classical gods, and fighting elephants in Africa, but it's understandable that the novelty would be lost on later readers, leaving only costumed characters acting out rather predictable adventures. Nonetheless, Barclay's two novels formed a crucial link between ancient and modern fiction, and demonstrated how an innovative writer could make those ancient novels novel again.

While Barclay looked back to the ancient Roman and Greek novel for models, other Latinists looked no farther than to More's *Utopia*.[147] Startled by reports from around the globe of the discovery of new lands with

alternative societies, many intellectuals adapted More's novel format—essentially a fictional travelogue with minimal characterization, usually limited to a native explaining the sights and customs to an outsider—in order to dramatize their own social theories, to indulge in wishful thinking, and/or to express fears about ongoing trends in their own society. The German scholar Kaspar Stiblin (1526–62) published a utopian fiction in 1555 entitled *Commentariolus de Eudaemonensium Republica* (Treatise on the Republic of Happiness), and his countryman Jakob Bidermann (1578–1639), a Jesuit priest and playwright, wrote one simply called *Utopia* between 1602 and 1604, though not published until 1630.[148] Maybe he was waiting to think up a more original title.

The first 17th-century Latin utopia deemed worthy of English translation—as early as 1609 and as recently as 1981—is *Another World and Yet the Same* (*Mundus alter et idem*, 1605) by an English clergyman named Joseph Hall (1574–1656). It has a promising start: the narrator, an Englishman named Mercurius Britannicus, is discussing the advantages of travel with a Dutchman named Drogius and a Frenchman named Peter Beroaldus—evidently based on the eccentric novelist François Béroalde de Verville, who I mentioned in my previous volume (343). If you're going to travel, Beroaldus argues, go long: forget about your neighbors in Europe—what of the *Terra Australis Incognita* at the bottom of the world, which no one has explored yet? Extolling multicultural awareness and a palpable sense of adventure, he talks his friends into voyaging there. Drogius is detained at Delft, and Beroaldus gets off in France, but they encourage the Englishman to push on: "and after two years, having left behind the Fortunate Isles, the coast of Africa, the land of the Monomotapensi [southern Africa], and the Cape of Good Hope, I greeted the Black Cape of Crapulia."[149]

But instead of dramatizing how Britannicus came to know these crapulous people (i.e., gluttons and drunkards), he begins describing their society and customs in detail as though he were a seasoned tour-guide. He moves on to nearby Viraginia, or New Gynia, populated by women (most of whom came from around the world to escape unjust husbands), and criticizes them for being uppity, vocal, and vain. He is especially disgusted by the women of the region of Aphrodysia, who devote all their time to seducing neighboring men. Here's the future bishop of Norwich on their skimpy clothing and

heavy makeup: “All strolled about with an exposed face and breasts. The rest is covered, but with a material of the most extreme lightness and the most splendid colors. Yet their naked parts appear so obviously painted with white lead, according to the customs of the Moscovites, that you would swear you saw a mask, a statue, or a plastered wall, not a human skin” (2.5). He then describes Moronia, the most populous country he visits; located beneath the South Pole, it is a nation of idiots committing every kind of stupidity. Finally he reports on Lavernia, a lawless land of crime and fraud. Barely interacting with anyone, and noting only that he once founded a school of soothsayers in Lavernia, Britannicus concludes his visit: “These men, these customs, and these cities I gazed upon, was astonished by, and laughed at; and after 30 years, weakened by so much labor of traveling, I returned to my homeland” (4.7).

In this short novel Hall merely exaggerates and satirizes the common abuses of his time, with little imagination but with a heavy cargo of erudition plundered from classical sources, travelers’s tales, and theological speculations, conveyed with a ponderous wit that would be appreciated only by his fellow Latin scholars. (One convoluted gag concludes, “The Critics will understand” [1.5], aware that no one else would.) *Another World and Yet the Same* demonstrates another reason why some writers turned to Neo-Latin: to share a kind of extended in-joke that would be lost on anyone without a classical education. It’s a learned curiosity, but little more.

Written during the same decade as Hall’s utopia but not published until 1623, *The City of the Sun* (*Civitas Solis*) by the Italian philosopher Tommaso Campanella (1568–1639) is a dialogue between a knight of Malta and one of Columbus’s sailors, who describes an ideal city in Taprobana (Sumatra or Ceylon), a Catholic totalitarian state that reminds us that one person’s eutopia is another’s dystopia. Inspired by both Hall and Campanella (whose work circulated in manuscript), a Lutheran theologian named Johann Valentin Andreae (1586–1654) published *Christianopolis* in 1619, a kinder, gentler religious utopia than *The City of the Sun*. The author admits upfront “The structure of my *Christianopolis* has nothing artistic about it, but only simplicity.”[150] In a more blatantly allegorical manner than most utopias, the narrator explains how, as a wanderer of the world, he boarded the ship *Fantasy*, set out on the Academic Ocean, and was blown

off-course by “hurricanes of envy and false accusations” until he shipwrecked on the tiny island of Capharsalama, located near Hall’s southern lands. Examined for his worthiness and willingness to be born again, he is taken to the capital Christianopolis and begins to describe the customs of this predictably square-shaped city. It’s Squaresville, man! Everyone leads an idealized Christian life, a theologian’s daydream of what the world would look like if folks took his sermons to heart. At the end of the short novel, the visitor asks permission to return home to gather some friends to bring back to Christianopolis, allegorically implying it is to be found within.

In 1624, the English philosopher Francis Bacon (1561–1626) began writing a Latin utopia published posthumously (and in English) as *New Atlantis* (1627). A nameless narrator tells how his ship of 50 men, heading from Peru to China, was blown off course in the southern Pacific to the island of Bensalem, a Christian nation devoted to scientific inquiry. Bacon sprinkles his narrative with imaginative details, such as the Bensalem mode of greeting—raising the arms slightly to the side, like penguins—and that their brick is “of somewhat a bluer color than our brick.”[151] Unlike Hall, Bacon dramatizes the visitors’ gradual introduction to Bensalemite customs, some explained by a Jew named Joabin, one of a small number of Jews-for-Jesus types. He tells the narrator Bensalem is the chastest nation on the Earth—“It is the virgin of the world” (173)—and that, like Ahmadinejad’s Iran, it has no homosexuals. (Bacon is suspected to have been gay.) After the secretive arrival of a spokesperson for Salomon’s House—which inspired England’s Royal Academy—the narrative turns into a lecture on Bensalem’s scientific researches, which is where Bacon abandoned the work. His surviving notes indicate the lecture would go on for some length, but not whether he would probe the uneasy coupling of conservative Christianity and scientific empiricism. There’s something fishy about the place, a secretive, suspiciously well-ordered country where informants like Joabin are sometimes “commanded away in haste” for unexplained reasons (175), and it’s interesting to speculate whether Bacon would have showed that religion and science are incompatible, or compatible only in some creepy Kafkaesque way.

Other scholars tinkered with other genres, one of them inadvertently inventing science fiction in the process. In 1609, the German astronomer Johannes Kepler (1571–1630) wrote a short narrative about a night when, thinking about magic and the moon, he fell asleep and dreamed he was reading a book written by an Icelander named Duracotus, son of a witch. As a lad, Duracotus studied astronomy under Tycho Brahe in Denmark (as Kepler had), and when he returned home to tell his mother about what he had learned, she takes him to a "daemon" who has visited the moon. At her command, the Icelandic spirit tells of his trips to what Moonlings call Levania. He occasionally takes a human with him, and describes what is now called g-force: "In every instance the take-off hits him as a severe shock, for he is hurled just as though he had been shot aloft by gunpowder to sail over mountains and seas. For this reason at the outset he must be lulled to sleep immediately with narcotics and opiates."[152] Unfortunately, nothing more is said of these drugged astronauts; instead the spirit describes lunar geography and what the heavens look like from the moon (the subject of a paper Kepler wrote in college in 1593). Of the moon's inhabitants, he gives only Lovecraftian hints: monstrous size, rapid growth, short lifespan, amphibious, legs stronger than a camel's, wingéd. "In general, the serpentine nature is predominant" (28). Shortly after, the dreamer awakes. The 1609 manuscript was carelessly circulated—resulting in Kepler's mom being accused of witchcraft!—so Kepler returned to it in the 1620s and added over 200 explanatory notes and an appendix, all of which was published posthumously as *The Dream* (*Somnium*, 1634). It's a "strange and bizarre" composition (as a friend of Galileo's reported), a 90-page contraption welding occult sci-fi to lunar geography and astronomical data (including equations and diagrams). After initial rejection by the scientific community for its weirdness, *The Dream* came to be accepted as a valuable document in the history of astronomy, but it also plays a role in the history of science fiction.[153]

Another example of the *somnia* genre is *Comus* (1608) by the Dutch scholar Erycius Puteanus (Eerryk de Putte, aka Hendrik van der Putten, 1574–1646), an early example of the kind of fantasy novel in which a character undergoes a series of strange adventures until the clichéd kicker whereby he suddenly wakes to "find all this to be but a dream."[154] A

wanderer in the dark woods encounters the Greek god of pleasure Comus, hermaphroditic and tipsy, who invites him to join the party back at his palace. Disgusted, the narrator prepares to leave, only to be whisked away to the palace, where he witnesses every sort of debauchery. He meets an old man named Tabutius, who had partied with Comus when younger, but now only watches and condemns. Don't be deceived by what looks like a good time, he warns the narrator:

> There is no love here, but dissimulation, no true friends, but lords and masters. Do you not behold their pleasant and jovial countenances? under those do they hide their envy and malice. If you be not cautious, their feigned courtesy will deceive you. Neither can you so much as admit of a benefit from them without hurt; Comus has banished candor and ingenuity, but he's made dissimulation and deceit free citizens. They are courteous until they think they have obliged you; but then they assume the command, and if they have not a friend altogether conformable to their will, they begin to hate him. (45–46).

The middle third of the novel is dominated by Tabutius's party-pooping discourses, which Puteanus' translator took the liberty to break up with two embedded cautionary tales, one of an adulteress (76–99)—adapted, as Mish notes (39) from *Decameron* 7.8—and one about a romantic rivalry (140–63). Comus's party, which has the same air of desperate hilarity that hangs over Trimalchios's feast in Petronius's *Satyricon,* comes to a messy end as two guys fight over a girl named Circe and the lights go out. *Comus* is a creative attempt to dramatize the old philosophical debate about the superiority of temperance over pleasure, a difficult task because the scenes of revelry—fueled by delicious food and wine, and attended by women with names like Riot, Luxury, Lasciviousness—are invariably more appealing than tedious lectures on the advantages of "severe virtue." Puteanus enlivens the text with a number of poems, though in this regard he would be outdone when John Milton, after reading his novel, took up the theme for his masque *Comus* (1634).[155]

Nota bene some other Neo-Latin fictions to be briefly noted (because unavailable in translation): The Bavarian Jesuit Johann Bissel (1601–82)

wrote two novels: *Icaria* (1637), a comic, autobiographical one set during the Thirty Years' War, and *Argonauticon Americanum* (1647), an adventure novel set in South America, loosely based on an older Spanish travel memoir, and written in sensuous detail. As a Jesuit named Govea travels from the Canary Islands to Ecuador, he makes a horrific, *Heart of Darkness* trip north to Panama and then south along the coast to Peru that reduces him to an animal state. In his essay on the *Argonauticon*, Harold Hill says it is both "allegory and psychological novel" and presents a contrary view of America: "Here is no promised land, no new world of vast riches and exotic wonder to justify the human sacrifice demanded by its conquest. America is seen as harsh and uncompromising reality, an arena in which men must solve the riddle of chaos before they can bring order to themselves" (662). Giovanni Vittorio Rossi (1577–1647), a friend of Barclay's during his final days in Rome, wrote an allegorical novel (under the pseudonym Janus Nicius Erythraeus) called *Eudemia* (1645), a satire of 17th-century society in the manner of *Euphormio's Satyricon*.[156] Claude-Barthélemy Morisot (1592–1661), who published a sequel to Barclay's *Satyricon*, also published a political allegory entitled *Peruviana* (1644) that sported with French politicians under Incan names.

An English Puritan named Samuel Gott (1613–71), a lawyer and Member of Parliament, attempted to steer all these genres—romance, allegory, utopia, dream—in a new direction in *Nova Solyma* (1648). This ambitious, 400-page novel is a dud, but an interesting one. It is set about 50 years into the future, when Jews who have acknowledged Jesus as the messiah have returned to Palestine and rebuilt the old Solyma (Jerusalem) into a utopia. (No mention is made of the displaced Palestinians.) As the novel opens, three young men arrive there in time for the annual Daughter of Zion parade, this year starring a beautiful Jewess who beams at them as she passes. We quickly learn that she is the sister of Joseph, one of the three arrivals; he had left to tour Europe with his tutor, but got no farther than Sicily, where he was robbed, then scraped by as a painter's assistant until he was rescued by two students from Cambridge—stepbrothers Politian and Eugenius—who had run away from home to see the fabled Nova Solyma. Joseph is the son of a town elder named Jacob, at whose home the Englishmen stay for the next year. During that time, they both fall in love

with Joseph's sister, Anna, and nearly come to blows over her, but mostly they listen. And that's the main flaw of the novel: in addition to listening to the convoluted tale of Joseph's misadventures in Sicily, which is fine if derivative—part of it lifted, as its learned English translator points out, from a subplot in Montemayor's *Diana*[157]—they and the reader must endure many lectures and Puritan sermons on a variety of topics: methods of education, filial duty, clothing, literature, "higher love," marriage, the superiority of nature over art, dueling, "The Well-Regulated Mind," money, and a heavy load of Puritan theology, all of which takes up nearly half of the novel. Some are delivered by the patriarch Jacob, some by local professors, but most by Joseph, a budding poet and theologian who sustains an attack of spiritual "ecstasy" early on and a "dark night of the soul" near the end. Joseph also treats us to many of the poems and hymns he has written.

These set-pieces stop the narrative in its tracks for lengthy periods of time, and are sometimes clumsily motivated; for example, after Joseph tells of the demonic possession of a sinner named Theophrastus, the author writes: " 'Now,' said Eugenius, 'why should we not hear a few remarks about the just punishment of sin which God has ordained, and which Theophrastus has illustrated by his frightful state' "? (4.7). I'll tell you why, Eugene. It's the novelist's job to dramatize and aestheticize his themes—which in fact Gott does in parts—not to dump them on the page as long lectures. Gott's conviction of the importance of filial duty is effectively dramatized in two ways: in the contrast between filial Joseph and the runaways from England (who have to be goaded to write home to tell their father where they are), and in the contrast in Joseph's backstory between a princess named Philippina—a worldly, vain woman who falls in love with Joseph and defies her father to run after him, disguised as a young man, which turns messy when a 40-year-old widow hits on him/her, leading eventually to her suicide—and Joseph's obedient sister Anna, who acquiesces without a word of protest to her father's suggestion that she marry Politian. (Conveniently, she has a twin named Joanna, who is told to marry Eugenius.) With those two examples, only an author who mistrusts his material, or underestimates the reader's intelligence, will feel the need to preface them by a formal lecture by Jacob on filial duty (1.2). The reader

will get the point, and will also note that, aside from one sentence at the beginning, Anna and Joanna are utterly silent and passive throughout the novel, whereas Philippina is talkative, makes clever double entendres, and is daringly proactive.

The lectures on theology are likewise unnecessary, not to say irrelevant; even the translator, a conservative clergyman, interrupts the lecture on "The Origin and First Issue of the Created World" after a few pages to say, "These [ideas] are now so utterly out of date and out of all touch with our present knowledge, that it would be tedious to follow the lecturer right through to the end . . ." (4.3). The clean-living examples of Jacob and his family are enough to convey the advantages of the Puritan lifestyle, along with what appears to be the frugal, orderly life in Nova Solyma. (For a utopia, the author has little to say about its specific customs.)

But a fascinating set-piece near the middle of the novel suggests Gott wasn't writing a novel for readers, but rather a tutorial for future novelists. During a visit to the local university, Joseph and the Englishmen listen to a professor describe the different colored pens he awards to his best writing students, based on genre.[158] The best writer of plain, expository prose gets a pen made of iron; the best historian gets one of bronze; rhetoric: silver; poetry and drama: gold. Anyone else writing in 1648 would have stopped there, but the professor brings out one more.

> This pen showed more variety than any of the others, both in shape and in the metals of which it was made. When he had sufficiently showed it to them, he said:
>
> "This is for the most unfettered sort of literature we have; the ancients rarely exercised themselves in it, but of late it has been much praised. All styles of writing are permissible, and any subject may be included. It is akin to poetry, but written in prose with fragments of verse interwoven here and there.
>
> "Many have lately written in this style specious tales of so-called love and honour, and by the interest and attraction of their plots have been the cause of many innocent young minds, whom the crude mention of vice or indecency would shock, becoming inclined to pride, luxury, intrigue, and such splendid sins of the world of pleasure. Wherefore in our republic all

such books are put on the Index as the worst infection and plague that can be for the rising generation. . . .” (3.4)

And then, in a metafictional flourish probably inspired by the one in *Argenis*, the professor describes Samuel Gott’s attempt in *Nova Solyma* to discredit this trend—by having his romantic-adventure subplot about Philippina end not in marriage but in suicide, after being dragged through the mud of feminine immodesty, male homosexuality, mother/son incest, transvestism, and transgenerational lust—and then to convert the novel to Christian purposes:

> “There are a few authors indeed who do not follow this bad fashion; one we have heard of who is trying, as doctors do, to extract an antidote from the poison, and to use this style of writing to make the world better rather than worse. . . . the author is not eager for notoriety, nor cares to cozen vain and foolish readers, but wishes to spread abroad solid, healthy, literary pabulum. . . . he simply presents an abundant succession of incidents and observations, which every reader, according to his power of comprehension, may dwell upon, or skip, or censure. . . .
>
> “The argument of this book is the history of a life [Joseph’s] that is free, that has received a liberal education, and has been well and religiously brought up; it keeps within the limits of the humanly possible [like demonic possession?], and deals, as a rule, with the middle ranks of life, who are perhaps the best, and certainly not the least numerous. I would gladly extol it more, except that I should seem to be praising my own nation, for by a novel and daring fiction the scene of the tale is laid here in Nova Solyma and the author long ago described in his book, more as a prophet than as an historian, the life we lead in this present age. . . . But whether the work is fact or fiction is a minor point compared with the intention of the book—that is to say, the right ordering of a Christian’s life. (3.4)

I’ve quoted this passage at length because it is one of the earliest defenses of the novel, or rather, of the pedagogical potential of the novel. Just as his Jews come to embrace Christianity, Gott hopes future novelists will

renounce profane fiction for more spiritual novels.[159] In effect, Gott is theorizing the genre we now we call Christian fiction, those religiose novels that most booksellers shelve over by the bibles rather than with general fiction. That in itself is not admirable—for it demotes the novel from a work of art to a pedagogical tool, or propaganda—but one has to admire his recognition of the novel's capacity ("the most unfettered sort of literature we have") and of its future as the favorite literary genre of the middle classes. This is a real turning point in the cultural perception of the novel: a *wrong* turn in Gott's case—his novel sank into oblivion, and "pabulum" is *le mot juste* for Christian fiction—but still, this ambitious attempt to repurpose the novel makes *Nova Solyna* not only a key Neo-Latin novel but a neglected voice in the 17th-century dialogue about the legitimacy of fiction.

There is one more reason an early modern novelist would have used Latin rather than his vulgar tongue: a snooping housemaid or curious constable would probably mistake a book entitled *Satyra Sotadica de Arcanis Amoris et Veneris* for a scholarly tome on some arcane topic. But the lucky Latinist would possess what one connoisseur has called "the greatest of the Neo-Latin erotica" (Legman, 396–97), *Dialogues on the Arcana of Love and Venus* (aka *The Dialogues of Luisa Sigea*, 1660?) by a French lawyer named Nicolas Chorier (1612–92). Written in dialogue form in emulation of Aretino's *Ragionamenti* (name-checked near the end), this clever novel concerns the erotic education of women. The mother of 15-year-old bride Octavia has asked her married 18-year-old cousin Tullia to tell her what to expect on her wedding night, an opportunity the well-read and experienced Tullia jumps at because she has always had a crush on her little cousin. During the first two of the six dialogues, spent in bed, Tullia both lectures and demonstrates how couples have sex, laying emphasis on the link between knowledge and sexual fulfillment. Only uneducated, naïve women accept male notions of purity and virtue, and limit sex to procreation. Tullia chafes at (but doesn't reject) the male perception that smart, well-educated women are promiscuous: "it is the role of a woman *who is not foolish* and whose heart throbs in her breast, to act and be acted upon," she insists at the end of the second dialogue, adding later, "Every woman *with a judicious mind* should feel sure that she was born for her husband's pleasure and that

all other men were born for hers. The former you owe to your husband, the latter to yourself" (dialogue 5, my italics in both quotations). Tullia feels it is unfair that only men should have access to sexual knowledge (and to books like this one) and that men should be allowed to limit their wives' sexual activity. (Chastity belts are a hot topic, and a lascivious priest flagellates married women to keep their sexual appetites in check, inadvertently inflaming them.) The two young women come together again two weeks after Octavia's wedding; she not only dishes the details of her honeymoon but now agrees with Tullia that sexual activity makes a woman more intelligent: "The virile spear that opens our vulva also opens our reason concealed therein" (dialogue 5). Later that day they are joined by two studs for further spearing and sparring, and Tullia reiterates the importance of maintaining the *appearance* of honor and virtue, not from hypocrisy but from the recognition that those are the rules husbands expect women to play by in public; in private they'll play by their own rules.

Although it reads like a liberated woman's sex manual, a tale of female self-empowerment and of the subversion of unrealistic, male standards of behavior, the fact the *Dialogues* was written by a man casts doubts on its legitimacy, which Chorier tried to avoid (along with legal prosecution) by pretending this was the work of a 16th-century Spanish woman named Luisa Sigea, translated into Latin by Johannes Meursius. Male authorship also casts doubts on how we are to interpret the proactive female characters: their attitude toward sex sounds enlightened and healthy, but while Tullia defends lesbianism, she condemns male homosexuality (and anal sex) and argues that the ideal sexual position for a woman is beneath a man. The word *sotadica* in the title means homosexual (after the ancient Greek poet Sotades), so this "sotadic satire" may be at the expense of educated women, not in praise of them. Chorier's novel appeared around the same time as Molière's *Les Précieuses ridicules* (1659), and Elizabeth Wahl suggests Chorier is ridiculing his two smarty-pants cousins, reinforcing "misogynistic beliefs about the pretensions of educated women for the pleasure of a highly-educated, elite, and largely male audience" (220). Either way, Chorier's novel is an intellectually stimulating work, brainier than the merely physically stimulating porn pumped out by hacks. There may be other erotic Neo-Latin novels nearly as good, but for reasons given in the next chapter (see pp. 239–40) I'm not going to pursue them.

With one exception, the remaining Neo-Latin novels of the early modern period have not been deemed worthy of translation. The Dutch Catholic theologian Antoine Legrand (1629–99) wrote yet another Morish utopia "in confusing, crabbed" Latin about an ideal monarchy called *Scydromedia* (1669).[160] Showing a little creativity, the German educator and scholar Johann Ludwig Prasch (1637–90) wrote *Psyche Cretica* (1685) to please his pious young wife Susanna. At the age of 23, she published an essay entitled "*Réflexions sur les romans*" in which she complained that modern novels were inferior to classical ones and wallowed too much in "l'Adultere & la Sodomie," with the exception of *Argenis* and Giovanni Francesco Biondi's *L'Eromena.*[161] So her 47-year-old husband set out to write one to her taste. He adapted Apuleius's story of Cupid and Psyche (from *The Golden Ass*) to explore the concept of natural law: "actions that are obligatory in a human being by virtue of the fact that he is human."[162] Set in ancient Greece, the novel describes the efforts of an Athenian prince to reunite Psyche of Crete with Cupid, which happens only at the end when she ascends to heaven. Equating natural law with the Christian concept of *caritas*, Prasch produced a spiritual allegory that Samuel Gott would have got behind, but which doesn't sound very appealing. I hope Susanna liked it.

Other admirers of Barclay resorted to his roman à clef format to track the final century of the Holy Roman Empire under the Habsburgs. There's Anton Wilhelm Ertl's *Austriana Regina Arabiae* (1688), the anonymous *Aeneas Habspurgus* (1695), Andreas Dugonic's *Argonauticorum sive de vellere aureo* (1778)—which Jozef IJsewijn describes as "a huge mythological narrative under which, it seems, is hiding the Eastern policy of the Austrian emperors" (255)—and, closing out the 18th century, Christoph Friedrich Sangershausen's *Minos sive de rebus Friderici II apud inferos gestis* (1797–99). Heinz Hoffmann diplomatically says these political novels are "still awaiting closer study and interpretation" (11)—perhaps after the restoration of the Holy Roman Empire.

The one translated exception is *The Journey of Niels Klim to the World Underground* (*Nicolai Klimii iter Subterraneum*, 1741) by the Danish-Norwegian author Ludvig Holberg (1684–1754), who also wrote histories and plays. This is the crowning achievement of the Neo-Latin novel, the one exemplum an educated reader should know. Though nowadays it's

classified as science fiction, one of the first on the hollow-earth theme,[163] it's better understood as a stinging Menippean satire and as a radical contribution to the Enlightenment.

The protagonist is a recent college graduate who can't find a job. Exploring a Norwegian cave one day in 1665, Niels Klim tumbles down into the ether of the subterranean universe, which consists of the planet Nazar, its sun, and the Firmament (i.e., the underside of Earth). After orbiting for three days and killing a pesky griffin, Klim lands in Nazar's principal country of Potu (a reverse *utopi*a), inhabited like the rest of the planet by intelligent, mobile trees. In the first half of the novel, Klim records his experiences there: after he learns the Potuan language, Klim hopes for a royal appointment suitable to his high opinion of himself—he carries his college diploma with him, a comfort in times of frustration—but instead he is appointed the king's messenger, for this biped can move more quickly than the trees. In this capacity, he learns much about Potu, a conservative but reasonable commonwealth far superior to anyplace in Europe. The rest of Nazar, not so much: in chapter 9, Klim tours the arboreal world and encounters various versions of utopia: the inhabitants of one land enjoy perfect health, but are indolent as a result; the leafy citizens of Lalac don't have to labor, so they squander their lives in enervating luxury; the rich trees of Kimal spend all their times nervously guarding their riches, and so on. In Cocklecu, gender roles are reversed, to Klim's disgust. (The queen keeps a seraglio of 300 handsome men, and Klim makes like a tree and leaves for fear of being added to them.) Mascattia is populated by absent-minded philosophers who let everything go to waste; the Land of Reason "languished for want of fools," and the Land of Innocence is so dull that Klim feels he's in a quiet forest back home. Tension, contrast, difference is missing from all these utopias, ironically the very irritants from which utopians want to escape. After visiting a dozen more distinct countries—all of this a parody of the grand tour of Europe wealthy graduates took at the time—Klim returns to Potu no wiser than before. To attain a higher position, he proposes a new law banning females from the Potuan government, allegedly for the greater good of the country, but frankly admitting "that my own private interest and a desire for revenge were the *primum mobile* of this project."[164] The king is shocked: "we are

of the opinion that is it absurd and unjust entirely to exclude trees of the finest talents from public honours, especially as Nature, who does nothing in vain, can never be supposed to have given them all those notable advantages to no purpose" (9). (Remember, Holberg was writing in 1741, when the idea of women serving in government was almost unthinkable.) Consequently, Klim is banished to the Firmament, conveyed there by a giant bird.

The second half of the novel tracks Klim's "progress" from a lowly servant of the monkey king of Martinia (a parody of France) to the conqueror of the entire Firmament. The variety of lands there is more fantastic than those on Nazar: a land of corrupt jackdaws; Crotchet Island, inhabited by bass fiddles with arms and hands who communicate by playing themselves; other regions populated by animals enacting the symbolic roles European poets have given them; and Pyglossia, where people speak out of their fundaments, anticipating by two centuries the Talking Asshole in Burroughs's *Naked Lunch*. (Holberg intended his fundamentalists to parody those who talk dirty in public.) The most primitive land Klim visits, to his humiliation, is the only one inhabited by humans like himself. A cultural imperialist of the worst sort, he imposes his European values on these simple people, teaching them warfare and weapons-manufacturing, and leads them into war against other Firmament nations, resulting in some 100,000 casualties. Chafing under his ruthless tyranny, his subjects rebel and drive him into hiding, where he finds a tunnel that leads him back up to Earth, 12 years after he left. He tells his story to an old friend, who advices him to keep it to himself and helps him find a modest position as a country curate. Klim's manuscript is discovered after his death and published by his children.

Niels Klim is the most novelistic of the Neo-Latin utopias because it is character-driven. Klim is not a passive transmitter of the sights but a character struggling with his sense of self-worth, exacerbated by his failure to find a job after graduation. His tutors in Potu judge him "extremely quick of apprehension, but of so weak and uneven a judgment that he hardly merits to be considered as a rational creature" (3). Klim wants to show the king his college diploma in protest, but the king agrees with his tutors; another tells Klim "you only see the surface of things, and not the substance" (3). During Klim's travels, he is quick to see how Potuan culture

differs from European, but he is too much a victim of his pedantic education to grasp its superiority. He is surprised when everyone laughs after he boasts that in college he "had written three dissertations upon the slippers of the ancients," and throughout the novel he shows off his useless classical education by quoting snippets from Latin authors (Ovid, Juvenal, Horace, Virgil), often misquoting them and/or misapplying them in the self-aggrandizing manner of Barclay's Euphormio.[165] Klim is exposed as the worst kind of European: superficial, provincial, misogynistic, closed-minded, imperialistic (his actions replicate the violent colonialism underway in the 17th century), and consequently he is the perfect narrator for Holberg's sweeping indictment of European culture—of human nature, really, for the parade of folly on display here is still going strong today.

There are obvious parallels between *Niels Klim* and *Gulliver's Travels*—which likewise is as much a character study as a cultural satire—but Holberg's novel has a greater affinity with novels of the French Enlightment like Montesquieu's *Persian Letters* and Voltaire's "philosophical romances." Montesquieu's epistolary novel comes to mind in a brilliant metafictional move in chapter 13 when Klim comes across a book entitled *Tanian's Journey to the Superterranean World*, a looking-glass reversal of *Niels Klim's Journey to the Subterranean World* narrated by a Tanachite (a nation of "rational tigers") who visited Europe and reported back. The 11-page selection from Tanian's book makes explicit the implicit criticism of European countries in Klim's narrative, and (like *Persian Letters*) takes full advantage of the defamiliarization of a culture when seen through alien eyes. But instead of being humbled and enlightened by Tanian's tigerish critique, Klim stops reading when the narrative reaches his homeland in Scandinavia:

> Thus far I patiently attended, but my indignation was now raised and I would hear no more, declaring that these were fictions of a partial writer, and one who was overrun with spleen. But when my heat a little abated, I began to form a more favourable judgment of this itinerary as I saw that the author, though he appeared in many places to be partial and not to have had the best regard to truth, was not, however, mistaken in his judgment, but had often hit the nail, as we say, on the head. (13)

That doubles as Holberg's summary of his achievement, one seconded by later writers. The novel was translated into all the major European languages in the 18th century, influenced Casanova's own hollow-earth novel (see pp. 390–93 below), was partially translated by Thomas de Quincey, and is included in Roderick Usher's occult library. In this case, Holberg's choice of Neo-Latin was a wise one, for had he written *Niels Klim* in Danish, it would be even less known than it is now. Nevertheless, by the time Holberg published this fascinating novel, Latin had lost favor with the cultured classes, who had adopted a new lingua franca, if not yet in the world of science and scholarship, then certainly in *le beau monde*.

Notes

1 I'll use *DQ1* and *DQ2* henceforth to distinguish between the two, and reserve *Don Quixote* only for the combined work. All quotations are from Grossman's smooth translation (unless otherwise noted), and refer to volume/chapter.

2 This is derived from datable events in the captive's tale (1.39–41), though Cervantes paid little attention to chronology and makes an irreconcilable mess of it. See the article "Chronology in Cervantes' works" in Mancing's *Cervantes Encyclopedia* (145–46), a worthy squire for any scholarly knight.

3 *Lectures on* Don Quixote, 55.

4 This 16-year-old beauty falls for and runs away with a flashy ex-soldier who robs her and abandons her in a cave. He is characterized by an obstreperous fashion sense, "decked out in a thousand colors and wearing a thousand glass trinkets and thin metal chains." For an illuminating sociological treatise on this phenomenon, see Jay Louis's *Hot Chicks with Douchebags* (NY: Simon Spotlight Entertainment, 2008).

5 "Prettiest Girl of All Time," an acronym from Wallace's *Infinite Jest.*

6 Ioan Williams argues that this story of a man driven crazy by suspicions of his wife's chastity is a realistic version of *DQ*'s basic plot: the husband "reveals himself to be effectively mad because he allows an

obsession with the relationship between concept and reality to destroy his whole life" (13).

7 "Partial Magic in the *Quixote*," in *Labyrinths*, 194.

8 Page xxx in her edition of *Exemplary Stories.*

9 Lacey, The New Arthurian Encyclopedia, 87.

10 "Foreword" to Nabokov's *Lectures on* Don Quixote, xiv.

11 In his exemplary story *Rinconete and Cortadillo*—which is mentioned in 1.47—Cervantes describes a Seville crime syndicate modeled on a religious fraternity; its members are practicing Catholics, and its newest member Rinconete is "astounded at how certain and confident they were that they would go to heaven as long as they did not neglect their devotions, while their lives were dedicated to robbery, murder, and crimes against God" (p. 105 in Lipson's edition). Lurking behind this story and probably *Don Quixote* as well is Erasmus' *Manual of a Christian Knight* (*Enchiridion militis christiani* [1503], translated into Spanish in 1526), which urges Catholics to practice their religion's ethics and not to limit themselves to its rites and observances. The scholarly consensus is that Cervantes' religious views were influenced by those of the Dutch humanist.

12 While "the book of Judges presents an extraordinarily rich collection of thrilling war stories and tales of individual heroism in the battles between the Israelites and their neighbors . . . [it] has very little to do with what *really* happened in the hill country of Canaan in the Early Iron Age"—Finkelstein and Silberman, *The Bible Unearthed*, 99, 122.

13 This should go without saying, but some get so carried away with the *idea* of Don Quixote that they neglect the text that contains him. (He's a literary character, not a Rorschach test.) Davenport says he knew a professor who taught the novel without ever having read it (xiv).

14 The first scene in *Western* literature: in the late-16th century Chinese novella *Scholar Liu's Quest of the Lotus*, a student goes to a bookstore to buy some porn novels (Wang, *Ming Erotic Novellas*, 93).

15 *Pricksongs & Descants,* 79. This is from the prologue to his "Seven Exemplary Fictions."

16 But rationality isn't everything, and Sancho is hardly an admirable character. He abandons his family without informing them to accompany Don Quixote, he is greedy, a liar (especially regarding

Dulcinea), an eager supporter of the African slave trade (1.29), "a mortal enemy of the Jews" (2.8), illiterate, and a vulgar materialist: "You're worth what you have, and what you have is what you're worth" (2.20). As governor of his "island," he speaks like a right-wing conservative: "I intend to favor those who labor, maintain the privileges of the gentry, reward the virtuous, and, above all, respect religion and the honor of the clergy" (2.69). Cervantes knew he would have been banished from Sancho's plutocracy.

17 Of almost no value—except as a cautionary example of how religion can erode a fine mind—are the essays of the Spanish Catholic philosopher Miguel de Unamuno gathered under the title *Our Lord Don Quixote*. For example, he passes over the key book-burning chapter (1.6) because "It is a matter of books and not of life" (52), blind to the glaring fact *Don Quixote* is all about the influence of books on life and the crucial importance, therefore, of choosing wisely among them.

18 *Beyond Good and Evil,* section 154, in Kaufmann's *Basic Writings*, 280. What did Nietzsche think of Cervantes' novel? "Today we read *Don Quixote* with a bitter taste in our mouths, almost with a feeling of torment, and would thus seem very strange and reprehensible to its author and his contemporaries: they read it with the clearest conscience in the world as the most cheerful of books, they laughed themselves almost to death over it"—*On the Genealogy of Morals* (2.6), in *Basic Writings*, 502–3.

19 Book 4, chap. 13 in the faithful Weller/Calahan translation, hereafter cited by book/chapter.

20 See Williamsen's "Beyond Romance: Metafiction in *Persiles*," which includes a chart depicting the novel's nesting, Russian-dolllike narrative structure (112).

21 But for two vigorous, erudite defenses of it, read Wilson's *Allegories of Love* and Armstrong-Roche's more recent *Cervantes' Epic Novel*.

22 See Johnson's "Of Witches and Bitches" on this point (16 and n25) as it relates to Cervantes' novella.

23 Instead of *La demanda del Sancto Grial* the text reads "*Brial*," an old Spanish word for a silk skirt or petticoat.

24 I realized too late that, before embarking on a study of early modern literature, one should first read Horace's *Ars Poetica* (c. 18 bce).

Building on Aristotle's *Poetics* (c. 335 bce), the Roman poet wrote the rulebook that all educated novelists of this period followed—*poetica* encompasses literature, not just poetry—as evident from the ubiquitous citations of his poetic essay.

25 This is the third time in a row I've used "adventuress," but I'm trying to revive this charming descriptive noun.

26 As *Justina* has never been fully translated into English—only a Reader's Digest version in John Stevens' *Spanish Libertines* (1–65) published in 1707—I'm relying principally on Damiani's book-length study and whatever I've been able to glean from his critical edition of the Spanish original.

27 Parker, for one, finds it hard to believe a 24-year-old could have written this and proposes a date after 1620 (57), but most critics date it anywhere between 1604 and 1608. The bookseller who published it, Roberto Duport, added a phony preface by Quevedo, which among other things rails against customers who browse without buying. It concludes, "Dear Reader, may God protect you from bad books, police, and nagging, moon-faced, fair-haired women." Amen to that. (All quotations are from Alpert's underannotated British translation, and will be cited by book/chapter. The preface appears on p. 83.)

28 Though it purports to be González's autobiography, it was more likely written by a member of the Spanish court in Brussels, possibly Jerónimo de Bran. (The novel was first published in nearby Antwerp.) Stevens' somewhat abridged translation occupies pp. 255–528 of his *Spanish Libertines*, and will be cited by chapter.

29 From his prologue to a 1971 edition of the novel, as translated by Dunn in *The Spanish Picaresque Novel* (110). A great admirer of early Spanish fiction, Goytisolo includes Guzman, Quevedo, and Don Gregorio Guadaña as characters in his inventive novel *A Cock-eyed Comedy* (2000).

30 Part 1, chap. 13 in Langton's 1816 translation, which is considered unreliable but is the only one available; hereafter cited by part/chapter.

31 This is one instance where the translator seems to have retained the original flavor of Espinel's prose; in his preface he notes with disapproval, "It was the custom in the author's days sometimes to indulge in a play of words that no longer accords with the taste of the

present age," and by ignoring such wordplay he deprives Espinel's novel of its linguistic fizz.

32 The first half was translated into English by Thomas Rodd in 1803, but the second half has never been translated; for that I've relied on chapter 8 of Carrasco-Urgoiti's *Moorish Novel.*

33 Preface to the 1850 edition of Irving's *Chronicle of the Conquest of Granada* (1829), p. 411 in the splendid Twayne edition. For this similar hybrid of fiction and history, Irving likewise invented a narrator, and in a letter described his work as "something of an experiment . . . [s]omething that was to be between a history and a romance" (xxii). But it sticks much closer to history than *The Civil Wars* does.

34 Page 4 in the excellent Trueblood–Honig translation, hereafter cited by act/scene except for editorial matter, which includes a lengthy "Conversation between the Translators" on pp. 275–302. (Among scholars, it is common to refer to Lope de Vega by his first name; I'm not being overly familiar.) Jorge Ferreira de Vasconcelos (1515?–84) of Portugal wrote several novels in dramatic form in the 1540s and '50s.

35 *Experience and Artistic Expression in Lope de Vega*, 2–3.

36 See bibliography for details. (I'm excluding books and essays on specific verse novels.) Addison is especially good on the explosion of examples ever since Vikram Seth revitalized the genre in 1986 with *The Golden Gate*, a charming and clever novel.

37 Unbelievable: three days after I typed that, I discovered that André Gide called *Paradise Lost* a novel in his *Imaginary Interviews* (1944). He meant that genres like poetry and drama are intended for group audiences, whereas the novel is intended for individuals; "Milton's poem [*sic*] speaks to each of those individuals separately, and that is why I described it as a novel" (66). But he also says the novel "is not a genre, strictly speaking, because it has no laws of its own" (62), which is true enough. And for that reason, "There is more to be done with it, much more, than anyone has attempted in the past" (73).

38 Fischer, *Romantic Verse Narrative*, 147.

39 Quoted in Stanley Mitchell's introduction to his recent translation, xiv.

40 Like Cervantes, Basile also wrote an adaptation of Heliodorus' *Ethiopian Story*, published posthumously as *Del Teagene* (1637).

41 Page 8 in Boyer's translation, hereafter cited by page. In this first volume she anglicized some characters' names (Lysis, Phyllis, Matilda), but in the second she reverted to the Spanish forms, and for consistency I'll use the latter throughout. Her titles are modern variants; Zayas's original titles were "Exemplary Novellas about Love" and "Second Part of the Entertaining and Honest Soirée."

42 Both volumes are filled with Zayas's own poems and lyrics.

43 For what little is known, see pp. 17–35 of Margaret Greer's *Maria de Zayas*, an exhaustive study of the writer and her work.

44 A modern reader's gaydar would be flashing by this point, but female solidarity rather than lesbianism seems to be what Zayas had in mind. In one tale, a would-be seducer disguises himself as a female to get close to his target and professes love for her over a year's time, which she and her maids find incredulous. "Who's ever seen a woman fall in love with another woman?" he asks when he reveals himself (227). In another story, a woman catches her husband in bed with his male page, so at least Zayas was aware of those "gross and abominable pleasures" (265).

45 John Sturrock, in his introduction (x) to an abridged selection from her two volumes.

46 Kassier, *The Truth Disguised,* 1–2—an excellent, compact study of *The Master Critic.*

47 Only part 1 of the novel has been translated, and that in an unreliable rendition by Paul Rycault done in 1681; henceforth cited by chapter.

48 The protagonist of Ibn Tufayl's novel *Hayy ibn Yaqzan* (12th cent.), also raised by animals on a deserted island, reaches the same conclusion; in his translator's note Rycault suggests it's conceivable the erudite Gracián knew this work, especially since it was written in Spain. In his introduction, Gracián admits his major inspirations were Homer's *Odyssey*, Heliodorus' *Ethiopian Story*, Alemán's *Guzman*, and John Barclay's *Euphormio's Satyricon*.

49 Freidman's "Afterword" to Spadaccini and Talens's *Rhetoric and Politics*, 355.

50 *Selected Non-Fictions*, 23–24. Borges wrote a poem about him too.

51 See his *Art of Worldly Wisdom* (*Oráculo manual y arte de prudencia*, 1647), which compresses his views into 300 brief sections. It was

admired by Schopenhauer and Nietzsche, and is available in a variety of editions.

52 D. W. Jefferson, "*Tristram Shandy* and the Tradition of Learned Wit" (1951), quoted (and updated) in my "Alexander Theroux's *Darconville's Cat* and the Tradition of Learned Wit," 233.

53 Translated in Haidt's *Seduction and Sacrilege*, 49.

54 From Thomas Nugent's 1772 translation, book 1, chapter 4 (hereafter cited by book/chapter). Nugent omits two chapters in book 2—a sustained attack on a forgotten Portuguese book of theology—but otherwise his rendition is faithful and fun to read. He appends only a few explanatory notes; for a text as allusive as this, the serious reader has to consult an annotated Spanish edition (like José Jurado's magisterial, 975-page tome) to learn the identities of Pecenelus, Pagninus, Vatablus, et al.

55 Translator Nugent joins in on the fun in 6.2, after a character recites a ludicrous Latin *decima* (a 10-line poem), whose translation the Nuge shirks in a footnote: "Do so much, kind reader, as just to put this extempore of the reverend father beneficiary, and another you will meet with presently (the purport of both which is only to tell the author of the Latin decimas that he is a fool and an ass) into English verse with echoes, whilst I step forward and prepare the next chapter for your entertainment."

56 Part 1 of *Friar Gerund* was published in 1757 but was soon suppressed (the concluding part 2 didn't appear until 1768); Sterne began writing *Tristram Shandy* in 1759, so it's unlikely he ever read, much less was influenced by, Isla's novel. For more on the similarities between Isla's novel and those of Sterne and Fielding, see Polt's "The Ironic Narrator in the Novel."

57 Schellinger's *Encyclopedia of the Novel,* 1265. Mónica Bolufer challenges this view in "Poisonous Plants or Schools of Virtue? The Second 'Rise' of the Novel in Eighteenth-Century Spain" (pp. 199–214 in Mander's *Remapping the Rise of the European Novel*), but her examples sound trivial and derivative. She admits "resistance to novelty was stronger in Spain, and the weight of tradition heavier" (200) than elsewhere in Europe.

58 Observations like that prevented the novella from gaining the censors' approval for publication; it circulated widely in manuscript, but was not published until 1789, seven years after Cadalso's death.

59 His first novel, a utopian work entitled *Observations of a Dutch Officer in the Newly Discovered Kingdom of Felicity*, is lost; a second one, *Moroccan Letters*—an epistolary novel modeled on Montesquieu's *Persian Letters* and Goldsmith's *Chinese Letters* (aka *Citizen of the World*)—was published posthumously in 1793 but has never been translated into English.

60 Rebecca Haidt (whose book on Isla was cited a few notes back), "The Enlightenment and Fictional Form," in Turner and López de Martínez's *Cambridge Companion to the Spanish Novel*, 43. Her essay provides a good overview of other 18th-century Spanish novels, though, as noted earlier, they sound derivative and minor.

61 Chap. 1 in Haldane's online translation, hereafter cited by chapter (which are his creation, not in the original).

62 Translated by Florence M. Weinberg in her book *Gargantua in a Convex Mirror*, 11. See also Glowa's fine book on Fischart, which provides a detailed plot summary of his novel (111–15).

63 Page 12 of his introduction; P. F.'s translation, with his departures from the original in boldface, occupies pp. 91–184. The original German novel is available in a translation by H. G. Haile entitled *The History of Doctor Johann Faustus*.

64 Richard Newald (1957), quoted and translated by Kenneth Negus in his *Grimmelshausen*, 93. Reproductions of the frontispiece can be seen in the books of Bjornson (171), Menhennet (64), and Otto (332).

65 Book 1, chap. 14 in Mitchell's British translation, hereafter cited by book/chapter.

66 I'm guessing such language is why *Simplicissimus* wasn't translated into English until 1912, and not in unexpurgated form until 1986. I'm also guessing this is why the novel has never been included in any line of classics (Everyman's Library, Modern Library, Penguin and Oxford classics—all have excluded it from their ranks).

67 Sylphs were associated with air; it's odd that Grimmelshausen would feature them rather than nymphs (or nixies, as they're called in German

folklore) or even gnomes, who represent the subterranean world in Paracelsus's scheme (see next chapter, n62).

68 Chap. 15 in Adair's unabridged translation of *Simplicissimus*, which includes the *Continuation* as book 6. I didn't cite this for books 1–5 because the translation is a little stiff and doesn't catch Grimmelshausen's playful, punning style as well as Mitchell does. It does, however, have an invaluable set of annotations to the learned novel.

69 For stylistic consistency, I'm going to continue using Mitchell's translations (cited by chapter), though there's an excellent earlier translation entitled *The Runagate Courage*. ("Runagate," an archaic form of "renegade," is an attempt to translate *Landstörtzerin*, a thieving vagabond.)

70 "In German *Courasche* is army slang, a rough equivalent of the English word *guts*, denoting the raw physical courage of the male animal"—introduction to *The Runagate Courage*, 20.

71 The translators of *The Runagate Courage* (1965) render his name Hopalong: "the German is *Springinsfeld*, literally 'jump in the field,' and it is used to describe a carefree, flighty youth" (111n3). They couldn't have used Skippy? In the book title, *seltzame* means "strange, odd." "Tearaway" is a British term for a reckless, irresponsible teenager.

72 See Negus, 121–43, and chap. 7 of Menhennet's *Grimmelshausen the Storyteller*. These and other critics agree that the overtly religious conclusion of the cycle is a letdown.

73 Quoted on p. xi of Adair's introduction.

74 That bizarre situation—involving a castle burglary with an inside man dressed as a woman—is reworked in *Summer Tales.*

75 Book 5, chap. 6 in Russell's translation, hereafter cited by book/chapter.

76 Book 1, chap. 6 in the Jordan/Hardin translation, which is abridged "by approximately twenty percent as a concession to modern tastes" (9). *Verdammt!*

77 "Tracking Herr Schnabel," in *Radio Dialogs II*, 52 (punctuation *sic*). Schmidt goes on to note that Schnabel evidently based his island on Tristan da Cunha in the south Atlantic, uninhabited at the time, but which later developed along lines remarkably similar to those Schnabel envisioned—life imitating art.

78 One of the earliest attempts to refute mythology by offering rational explanations for them. Critics note "that Palaephatus's book was well known throughout the eighteenth century, and we may assume that Wieland's ideal reader would be sufficiently familiar with it to understand the fun here" (W. Daniel Wilson, 63n36).

79 Book 1, chap. 6 in the anonymous 1773 translation, the first and last time *Don Sylvio* was translated into English. Ernest A. Baker's 1904 edition is based on it, but omits the essential preface. It's an outrage there isn't a modern translation available of this major German novel.

80 Paul Scarron's *Roman Comique* (1651) will be discussed in the next chapter; the *Bachelor of Salamanca* (1736–38) is a translation/adaption by Lesage of a minor novel by Castillo Solórzano (see p. 28 above); the *Foundling* is Fielding's *Tom Jones* (1749), and *Candide* and *Gargantua* you know.

81 Page xv of the translator's preface to the 1773 edition (hereafter cited by book/chapter), the first and last time *Agathon* was published in English despite its reputation as Wieland's greatest novel. Though uncredited, the translator has been identified as John Richardson, who probably translated *Don Sylvio* as well. He translated the first version of *Agathon*; Wieland published revised, expanded editions in 1773 and 1794.

82 The narrator compares Agathon to the protagonist of *Sir Charles Grandison* (10.5), and seems to have *Clarissa* in mind when he bitterly complains "it appears to be a mark of a hard and cruel heart, which finds a pleasure in the anguish and tears of his innocent readers, when a man has taken all the pains he can to prejudice us in favour of the hero or heroine of a surprizing history, merely to bring us at last to as calamitous a catastrophe as a melancholy misanthropic imagination can possibly conceive, and to overwhelm us with distress the more sensibly felt, and less easily endured, as brought upon us by the arbitrary will of the writer" (11.1).

83 *Hamburgische Dramaturgie* (1767), as translated/quoted in McCarthy, 77.

84 Section 1 in Wintersted's 1771 translation (hereafter cited by section), yet another Wieland novel never revived in English.

85 *The Oxford Companion to Philosophy* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1995), 185.

86 In the chapter of *A Sentimental Journey* entitled "A Fragment," lifted from Burton's *Anatomy of Melancholy* (lifted in turn from Lucian), Sterne also deals with the Abderites.

87 See McCarthy and Shookman for accounts of *The Private History of Peregrimus Proteus* (*Geheime Geschichte des Philosophen Peregrimus Proteus*, 1788–89), *Agathodämon* (1799), and his three epistolary novels, *Aristipp* (1801–2), *Menander und Glycerion* (1804), and *Krates und Hipparchia* (1805). In his wonderful radio program on Wieland, Schmidt praises "the inimitable grand mosaic" of *Aristipp* and claims it "is both the only <historical> and the only <epistolary> novel that we Germans have and can display with honor" (*Radio Dialogs I*, 115–16). But unlike most of Wieland's novels, this was never translated into English.

88 Book 1, chap. 1 of Dutton's unabridged translation (1798). There's a modern translation by John Russell in the same volume as his *Wilhelmine*, but it represents only a quarter of the 420-page novel. The surname Nothanker, added by Nicolai, means "anchor" in German and refers to the decoration on the engagement ring that Sebaldus gave Wilhelmine in Thümmel's novella.

89 Little has been written in English on Nicolai as an author, but there's a fine book by Pamela Selwyn entitled *Everyday Life in the German Book Trade: Friedrich Nicolai as Bookseller and Publisher in the Age of Enlightenment*, which indicates Nicolai knew whereof he speaks.

90 A printing term for 23 sheets of paper. Cf. Richter's *Invisible Lodge*: "Really, I should have filled an alphabet, or twenty-three sheets, with this scene" (chap. 33).

91 German theologians. Semler especially was one of the founders of biblical textual criticism, which treats so-called sacred writings as historical documents, not divinely inspired but cunningly contrived by men no different from the zealous Protestants who persecute Sebaldus.

92 Under the influence of Sterne's *Sentimental Journey*, Thümmel later wrote a lengthy *Journal of Sentimental Travels in the Southern Provinces of France* (1791–1805; abridged English translation 1821), but it's generally considered overly derivative of Sterne; to the translator of *Wilhelmine* "it seems a less than felicitous mixing of fiction and

travelogue that is of interest mainly for its depiction of life in France immediately before the Revolution" (viii).

93 See McKnight's monograph on this and Wezel's other novels. He quotes with guarded approval another critic's contention that Wezel's *Hermann und Ulrike* (1780) "is the best novel to come out of Germany in the 18th century" (254), which makes one wonder why it too has never been translated.

94 He plays the same tricks on her—pretending to help a needy family and interrupting her mail—that Valmont plays on Madame de Tourval in Laclos's *Dangerous Liaisons* (1782). A French translation of the wildly popular *Sternheim* appeared in 1776 and is considered by some critics to have been an influence on Laclos's more famous novel.

95 Letter of June 1774, quoted by Swales in his slim but perceptive book on *Werther* (88). The critical literature on *Werther* is enormous, but Duncan breaks it down with admirable concision in *Goethe's* Werther *and the Critics.*

96 Note to letter dated 16 June 1771 (and hereafter cited by date), from Rose's translation of the original 1774 version. Virtually all current English translations are from Goethe's revised version of 1787, but I prefer the more intense original: *that*'s the one that caused a big sensation. In fact, in the original version Werther argues "an author must necessarily spoil his book when he alters the story for a second edition, however much it may be improved from the artistic point of view" (15 August 1771), a passage Goethe retained for the revised edition!

97 Schweitzer suggests Wilhelm is the editor, which makes sense: he not only received most of the letters, but is better qualified than anyone to imagine his friend's state of mind during his final days.

98 In 1760, a Scottish poet named James Macpherson published a collection of what he claimed were fragments by an ancient Gaelic poet named Ossian. Goethe, among others, was an early fan and translated some of them into German (quoted at length in *Werther*), but soon lost his taste for them. It was later revealed that Macpherson had forged this material. Although Goethe couldn't have known that at the time, it was an inspired choice to have Werther identify with Ossian's forlorn, if spurious, lamentations; as Goethe said in 1829, Werther praises Homer

when he's still sane, and Ossian only after he's gone insane (paraphrasing Reiss, 35).

99 Note the repeated use of the word "suffering": translators argue that *The Sufferings of Young Werther* would be a more accurate translation of the German title, and would align it—as Werther does himself near the end—with the sufferings (the "passion") of Christ.

100 This is cute rather than masochistic, though it should be noted that Werther takes almost erotic delight in learning that when his servant requested Albert's pistols for Werther's suicide, it was *Lotte* who handed him the weapons.

101 I inexplicably left Werther out of my genealogy of Christ figures in volume 1 (115). *Mea culpa*.

102 *Conversations with Eckermann*, 2 January 1824.

103 During a low period in his life, in love with another man's wife, Wallace "called himself Sorrowful Werther" (Max, 147).

104 See Schiffman's "A Concert of Werthers" for the wide array of novels *Werther* inspired in the late 18th-early 19th centuries. Thomas Harrington, the protagonist of arguably the first American novel—Brown's *Power of Sympathy* (1789)—leaves a copy of *Werther* alongside his suicide note, just as Werther did with Lessing's play.

105 A copy of the unfinished manuscript turned up in 1910, and is available in an English translation by John R. Russell.

106 Book 1, chap. 17 in Blackall's translation. He is also the author of the excellent *Goethe and the Novel*.

107 Mignon broke Thomas Carlyle's heart. In his otherwise pugnacious preface to his 1824 translation, he laments: "This mysterious child, at first neglected by the reader, gradually forced on his attention, at length overpowers him with an emotion more deep and thrilling than any poet since the days of Shakespeare has succeeded in producing. The daughter of enthusiasm, rapture, passion, and despair, she is of the earth, but not earthly. When she glides before us through the light mazes of her fairy dance, or twangs her cithern to the notes of her homesick verses, or whirls her tambourine and hurries round us like an antique Maenad, we could almost fancy her a spirit; so pure is she, so full of fervour, so disengaged from the clay of this world. And when all the fearful particulars of her story are at length laid together, and we behold in

connected order the image of her hapless existence, there is, in those dim recollections, those feelings so simple, so impassioned and unspeakable, consuming the closely-shrouded, woe-struck, yet ethereal spirit of the poor creature, something which searches into the inmost recesses of the soul. It is not tears which her fate calls forth; but a feeling far too deep for tears. The very fire of heaven seems miserably quenched among the obstructions of this earth. Her little heart, so noble and so helpless, perishes before the smallest of its many beauties is unfolded; and all its loves, and thoughts, and longings, do but add another pang to death, and sink to silence utter and eternal. It is as if the gloomy porch of Dis, and his pale kingdoms, were realized and set before us, and we heard the ineffectual wail of infants reverberating from within their prison-walls forever" (xv–xvi). She inspired an opera by Ambroise Thomas later in the 19th century.

108 Since this unusual novel didn't appear until 1829, I decided not to discuss it and Goethe's other 19th-century novels (*Elective Affinities, Novella*).

109 Gerner lists 458 of these things published between 1792 and 1805, none of them read anymore.

110 German refugees troop across the opening pages of Goethe's *Hermann and Dorothea* (1797), a novella-length narrative poem that he called an "epic," even though it is probably better thought of as a verse-novel. To make that case, however, would entail a digression into Goethe's concept of a modern epic—which, as Blackall points out in his *Goethe and the Novel* (107), applies as much to the novel as the epic—so I'll let someone else make the case. A fine translation of *Hermann and Dorothea* can be found in Goethe's *Verse Plays and Epic* (247–307).

111 Page 9 in Robertson's translation. Coincidentally an English translation by John R. Russell appeared a year earlier (Camden House, 1996), but Robertson sticks closer to the original's typography and unconventional punctuation. A dozen years later, both translations of this astounding novel were out of print.

112 Wary of the dangerous influence of novels like *Werther*, Moritz defuses it when Anton attends a stage adaptation of *Werther*: in the climactic suicide scene, Werther's revolver misfires two times, so the improvising actor kills himself with a bread knife. The narrator remarks: "Hardly can

any tragedy ever have come to a more comical end than this one," but then notes: "This, however, did not cure Reiser of his ambitious fantasies, but rather it reinforced them, because he saw something so imperfect that it needed to be replaced by something perfect" (348). After reading *Anton Reiser*, Goethe put more aesthetic distance between himself and Werther in the revised version of his novel.

113 Vol. 1, chap. 23. The German original was published anonymously, but the 1794 English translation was ascribed to a Professor Kramer. Sir Walter Scott admired Naubert's work, and his historical novel *Anne of Geierstein* (1829) likewise features the Vehmgericht.

114 See Syndy Conger's essay listed in the bibliography. She also notes the influence of *The Necromancer* on Matthew Lewis's *Monk*, Percy Shelley's Gothic novel *St. Irvyne*, and (via the Schiller interpolation) on Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*.

115 Le Tellier, *Kindred Spirits*, 97.

116 Peter Will's clunky translation doesn't help; another translation, by Joseph Trapp, appeared a year earlier (1796), sensibly titled *The Genius, or The Mysterious Adventures of Don Carlos de Grandez*, but I decided to stick with *Horrid Mysteries* because of the Austen angle. Rev. Will, for whom English was a second language, evidently didn't have the benefit of an English editor either, for no one corrected the Shakespeare allusion in the author's defense of realism: "One says very little if one compares human life with a *romance*; it is much more than a *fairy tale*, or a *summer-midnight's dream*" (297).

117 Le Tellier, *Kindred Spirits*, 87.

118 Book 1, letter 12 in Robertson's online translation, apparently the first in English. Perhaps its celebrations of lust and sensuality blocked it from being translated earlier. Tieck's other novels from the 1790s have not been translated, so I pass over them with regret, especially "Franz Sternbald's Wanderings" (1798), a classic portrait-of-the-artist-as-a-young-man novel (*Künstlerroman*).

119 In his radio dialog on Tieck, Schmidt's antagonist interprets Romanticism "as the conscious attempt to find artistic expression—thematically, formally, linguistically—for the conviction that both the world and the life of the individual are unstable" (*Radio Dialogs I*, 151).

120 *The Novels of the German Romantics*, 159, quoting Schlegel's *Literary Notebooks* (see his *Lucinde and the Fragments*, 230). Many of Schlegel's pronouncements took the form of brief statements published in literary journals.

121 In one of his fragments, Schlegel issued a challenge that few writers or readers accepted until the 20th century: "If you ever write or read novels for their psychology, then it's quite illogical and petty to shrink from even the most painstaking and thorough analysis of unnatural pleasure, horrible tortures, revolting infamy, and disgusting physical or mental impotence" (*Lucinde and the Fragments*, 177).

122 Both quotations are from his *Literary Notebooks*, as quoted by Blackall, 28.

123 From the "Letter about the Novel" section of his *Dialogue on Poetry* (1799–1800), a critifiction in which five characters meet to discuss literature. Schlegel doesn't consider the novel a distinct genre, but rather any book that expresses a Romantic attitude, hence his punning remark, "*Ein Roman ist ein romantische Buch*" (The novel is a Romantic book). In the same "Letter," Schlegel defines "Romantic" as that "which presents a sentimental theme in a fantastic form," and by "sentimental" he means not "maudlin and lachrymose" but "that which appeals to us, where feeling prevails, and to be sure not a sensual but a spiritual feeling. The source and soul of all these emotions is love, and the spirit must hover everywhere invisibly visible in romantic poetry" (98–99).

124 Page 66 in Firchow's fine translation (1971), the first and only unexpurgated one in English. He adds a good selection of Schlegel's fragmented aphorisms, his preferred form of criticism.

125 See *The Concept of Irony*, 302–16, and then see Donald Barthelme's take on this conflict in his clever story "Kierkegaard Unfair to Schlegel" (*City Life*, 1970). In fact *Lucinde* reads like something Barthelme might have written. Unfortunately, Schlegel anticipated Kierkegaard's dour way of thinking: he converted to Catholicism, grew old and conservative, and turned his back on free-loving *Lucinde*, refusing to include it in his complete works of 1823.

126 Page 114 in Benjamin's translation, which is considered the best in English. In Greek mythology, Hyperion was one of the Titans; Diotima takes her name from a philosopher in Plato's *Symposium*.

127 Arno Schmidt quotes this part at the end of scene 7 of his supernovel *Evening Edged in Gold* (1975); Schmidt was as contemptuous of his fellow Germans as Hölderlin was.

128 Mathilde was based on the love of Novalis's life, a 12-year-old named Sophie von Kühn, who died of consumption at the age of 15 in 1797. Almost exactly four years later, Novalis died at the age of 28 of the same disease. (Sophie is the name of an allegorical figure in Klingsohr's fairy tale.) For a dramatization of their relationship, see Penelope Fitzgerald's overrated novel *The Blue Flower* (1995).

129 See Blackall's *Novels of the German Romantics* (108–15) for an overview, and Behler (69–114) for a more thorough account (though all the quotations are in German).

130 Pages 6–7 of Carlyle's introduction to his translation of *Army-Chaplain Schmelze* (1827). Richter's style had an enormous influence on Carlyle's own, and in fact came to be called Carlylese by English readers, usually disparagingly.

131 Richter probably had in mind the death and resurrection part of the Masonic initiation ceremony, but the well-read author may have known Lesuire's novel *The French Adventurer* (1782), in which priests keep nubile girls underground and scam them into thinking they've achieved heaven when brought aboveground for guilt-free sex. See pp. 388–90 below.

132 End of "Fourth Section" in Brooks's heroically faithful translation, hereafter cited by "sector" (as Richter calls them). See Richter's *School for Aesthetics* for a defense of his style, especially the section entitled "The Need for Learned Wit" (144–47).

133 The appendix, "Life of the Merry Masterkin Maria Wutz in Auenthal: A Kind of Idyll," was omitted from Brooks's translation but can be found in the Caseys's *Jean Paul: A Reader*, 83–114. It's an amazing piece about a village schoolmaster who writes his own versions of famous books he knows only by title. Though rather twee, it's as challenging as anything Richter wrote; at the end of one long, interrogatory sentence, the narrator remarks, "This question mark may come as a surprise to those readers who have lost track of the paragraphs," and on the same page speaks slightingly of "the rules of the novel" (103), which, he implies, are there only to be broken.

134 Dog-post-day 34, hereafter cited thusly.

135 The reference may be obscure: the late novelist David Markson studied his reviews with Talmudic absorption, appreciating perceptive remarks but more often exasperated at reviewers' errors and misassumptions. The only essay he wrote during the last 35 years of his life is entitled "Reviewers in Flat Heels: Being a Postface to Several Novels" (1990).

136 In Alexander Ewing's translation (note his alternative spelling of the protagonist's name), hereafter cited by chapter. Like Brooks, he works hard to reproduce Richter's quirky style. For an appreciation of his linguistic innovations, see Berger's close reading of a paragraph from *Siebenkäs* (88–92).

137 A frequently active volcano in Iceland (usually spelled Hekla); it's mentioned a few times in *Titan* (cycles 8, 75).

138 I will be citing the text by cycle. The final cycle is numbered 146, but Richter accidentally included two cycles numbered 43—unless that was a deliberate Sternean caprice.

139 Mahler's first symphony (1889) is loosely based on *Titan.*

140 But not according to Schlegel; see his *Lucinde and the Fragments* (231–33) for a harsh view of Richter, who nevertheless "cannot justly be denied the name of a great poet." Like most, he considers *Siebenkäs* to be his best novel.

141 Richter's conception of wit—which he once described as "the disguised priest who joins every couple" (*School for Aesthetics*, 123)—is the subject of an attractively written monograph by Paul Fleming, *The Pleasures of Abandonment*, a recent attempt to rescue Richter from oblivion.

142 A translation of the preface can be found in the appendix to Brooks's translation of *Hesperus* (2:458–61), which appeared a few years after his *Titan*.

143 The Library of Congress catalogues the *Clavis Fichtiana* as philosophy, not fiction, and no doubt bewilders readers unaware of its provenance.

144 Ludvig Holberg, quoted on p. xxiv of McNelis's introduction to the Dane's *Niels Klim*.

145 I'm tempted to make the Hemingwayesque claim that all modern European fiction comes from one book by Heliodorus called *An Ethiopian Story*; the deeper I delve into literary history, the greater its

influence appears. It is rightly included in the popular reference book *1001 Books You Must Read before You Die*.

146 Book 4, chap. 4 in Kingesmill Long's 1625 translation, which the editors of the splendid, modern bilingual edition of *Argenis* reprint because it is "excellent . . . vigorous and lively." Originally, the rare Ben Jonson was commissioned to translate the novel, but he lost his manuscript in a fire in 1623.

147 The Greek word *utopia* (*ou* + *topos*) usually has a positive connotation—hence the later coinage of *dystopia* for negative places—yet the word simply means "no (such) place." A positive utopia would be an *eutopia*.

148 For plot summaries of both, see Begley's appendix to his translation of Gott's *Nova Solyma*, 2:365–66, 371.

149 "The Occasion of This Travel," p. 17 in Wands's amply annotated edition, hereafter cited by book/chapter.

150 Page 153 in Thompson's translation; he says Andreae's Latin is rather fancy at times, but it doesn't come through in the translation.

151 Page 155 in Bruce's *Three Early Modern Utopias*, where *New Atlantis* occupies pp. 146–86. The "old" Atlantis, according to Bacon, is ancient America, whose civilization was wiped out in a divinely ordained flood. He apparently hoped the recently discovered America would come to resemble Bensalem.

152 Page 16 in Rosen's annotated translation, hereafter cited by page. This portion of Kepler's *Dream* first appeared in English translation in a sci-fi anthology called *Beyond Time and Space*, edited by August Derleth (NY: Pellegrini & Cudahy, 1950).

153 As I noted in my previous volume, there are some older prototypes, but Kepler was the first to put the science in science fiction.

154 Page 174 in Blair's translation (1671), for some reason retitled *The Vision of Theodorus Verax*—the pseudonym of Clement Walker (d. 1651), an English politician critical of the Long Parliament. Because of the misleading title and the absence of any indication of the book's origin, it wasn't until 1967 that a scholar (Charles M. Mish) identified this as a slightly abridged translation of Puteanus's *Comus*. For earlier examples of the *somnia* genre, see the discussions in chap. 3 of my previous volume of Boccaccio's *Corbaccio*, Colonna's *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili*, and Yagel's *Valley of Vision*.

155 See Ralph Singleton's essay in the bibliography for the relationship between the two works.

156 Again, see Begley for a summary and evaluation (2:368–71); he makes it sound quite interesting.

157 Begley's 1902 translation will be cited by book/chapter. Much of his introduction and extensive commentary argues that the novel, published anonymously, was written by John Milton. It wasn't until 1910 that Gott's authorship was established. Patrick devotes a long footnote to detailing the weaknesses of Begley's Miltonic translation (48), which are more stylistic than substantive.

158 Not an anachronism: although most people used quills, "ornamental pens made of metal were awarded as prizes in British schools in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries," Morrish notes in one of her informative essays on *Nova Solyma* (2003, 262). Her close reading of this episode is especially good, for Gott's Latin style changes with each genre.

159 As Morrish shows in a later essay (2005), Gott does the same with old wives' tales: early in the novel (1.3), a matron tells her dream to Joseph's two younger brothers (an allegory on maintaining virtue, which can be boiled down to avoiding girls wearing flirty clothing), showing how old wives can convert their disreputable tales into clean Sunday-school lessons.

160 If interested, see Patrick's essay on it listed in the bibliography, the source of my quotation.

161 The first (1640) in a trilogy of heroic romances written by the diplomat and historian (1572–1644). He's one of the few Italian novelists of the early modern period; I decided there were not enough of them to warrant coverage, especially after reading Ann Hallamore Caesar's "History or Prehistory? Recent Revisions in the Eighteenth-Century Novel in Italy" (pp. 215–24 in Mander's *Remapping the Rise of the European Novel*).

162 From Morrish's essay on *Psyche Cretica* (271), my source for Susanna Elisabeth Prasch's essay as well.

163 The first hollow-earth novel appears to be *La Vie, les aventures et le voyage de Groenland du Réverend Père Cordelier Pierre de Mésange* (1720) by Simon Tyssot de Patot (1655–1738), never translated into English.

164 Chap. 9 in McNelis's dumbed-down revision of the anonymous 1742 English translation of *Niels Klim* (hereafter cited by chapter, except for editorial apparatus): see next note.

165 This aspect of the novel is lost in McNelis's edition because he "decided to leave out all those quotations which contribute little or nothing to the story" (254), misunderstanding their function. (I was tempted to use the 1742 translation, which includes the quotations, but it doesn't include the handful of additions Holberg made to the second Latin edition of 1745, along with a playful "Apologetic Preface," which McNelis includes.) He also notes that Holberg's "memory for them was not so good as he thought it was" (233), again missing the point: it's Klim who is misremembering those quotations in the thick of action, not Holberg in the quiet of composition. A new, *faithful* translation is needed.

CHAPTER 2

The French Novel

In 1607, two years after Cervantes published the first part of *Don Quixote*, a French aristocrat named Honoré d'Urfé (1568–1625) published the first volume of *Astrea* (*L'Astrée*), which occupies the same position in French fiction as *Don Quixote* in Spanish: the nation's first modern novel. As the French critic Gérard Genette wrote in his preface to a severely abridged edition in 1964, "If there is a history of the Novel, not only as a 'literary genre,' but also as a mode of feeling and form of existence, *L'Astrée* is the key work in this history, and its most important moment; it is the narrow strait through which everything passes, and passes into the whole of modernity."[1] Like Cervantes, d'Urfé renovated older genres of the novel to create a work that would register the changes and challenges of a new world order supplanting the old. But while everyone's heard of *Don Quixote*, few people outside France have ever heard of *Astrea*, much less wandered through "this vast and curious wilderness of delights," as Saintsbury called it (175). This is partly due to its forbidding length: Cervantes wrote only one sequel to the first volume of *Don Quixote*, whereas d'Urfé brought out a second volume in 1610, and a third in 1619, each one longer than the last. After he died in 1625, his secretary Balthasar Baro edited and published the immense volume 4 in 1627, and the following year brought out the concluding volume 5, supposedly based on d'Urfé's rough drafts.[2] They add up to about 3,000 pages, three times as long as *Don Quixote*, and while often reprinted at the time, after 1647 the five-volume novel wasn't printed again until a modern edition appeared in 1925–28.[3] It fared worse in England, where John Davies' slightly abridged translation of all five volumes (1657–58) has never been reprinted. Steven Rendall's excellent English translation of volume 1 attracted little attention when it appeared in 1995, and it's unlikely we'll ever see a complete translation. *Quel dommage.*

At its simplest, *Astrea* concerns the longest lovers' tiff in literary history. At its grandest, d'Urfé's novel is an encyclopedic investigation into the nature of love, and a national epic that celebrates the era when the tribes of Gaul threw off Roman control and began the formation of what would become France. It melds several traditional genres of fiction into something new, as though d'Urfé decided singlehandedly to catch up the lagging French novel with the rest of Europe and produce a gigantic work that would overshadow their comparatively shorter works. He began with the pastoral genre, which, again like Cervantes, was his initial inspiration to write fiction. (He had written a pastoral poem entitled *Le Sireine* in 1596, and just before he died finished a pastoral play, *La Sylvanire.*) An extremely well-read aristocrat – his family had one of the largest libraries in France and he excelled at the Jesuit Collège de Tournon – he knew the Greek pastoral poets and the novella *Daphnis and Chloe*, Sannazaro's *Arcadia*, Montemayor's *Diana* (which especially impressed him), Torquato Tasso's play *Aminta*, and even Cervantes' *Galatea*. (The stilted pastoral novels produced by his fellow Frenchmen in the last quarter of the 16th century don't seem to have influenced him much, if at all.) D'Urfé set his novel in the 5th century around the banks of the river Lignon in the Forez region of southeastern France, where he himself had a castle. His shepherds and shepherdesses are actually the descendants of noblemen who quit the painted pomp of the envious court for a simpler life, and thus display polished manners despite their rustic garb – the first of many instances in the novel of the deceptiveness of appearances. It is a matriarchal society ruled by descendants of the Roman goddess Diana, who used to hunt there with her nymphs – d'Urfé enhances his pastoral with sprinkles of myth and fairy tale – and where Druidism is still practiced.

A full plot summary of the novel would be long and tedious, but here's what one needs to know: Astrea, a vacuous beauty, has been vigorously courted by the shepherd Celadon for three years, ever since he was "fourteen or fifteen years old, and I only twelve or thirteen," she says vaguely (89). It was love at first sight, but the enmity between their parents meant they had to conceal their love. Back then, Astrea was entered in a beauty contest modeled on the Judgment of Paris; because the three contestants were to be presented "naked except for a light undergarment that covers them from the waist to the knee" (91), the judge playing Paris

must be a girl. Young Celadon disguises himself as one, wins the chance to play Paris, gets an eyeful of his beloved, and of course awards her first prize. Three years later (in the novel's present), when Celadon is "seventeen or eighteen" and she is "fifteen or sixteen," as Astrea guesses, she encourages him to flirt with another shepherdess to allay their parents' suspicion, which he reluctantly does, but when another shepherdess maliciously tells Astrea that Celadon is flirting for real, she throws a fit and banishes him from her sight. Celadon is so distraught at her decree that he throws himself into the Lignon and is swept away, presumably drowned.

Like the composer of an opera announcing its themes in the overture, d'Urfé loads the opening paragraphs with such words as *tyranny, enmity, ingratitude, inconstancy, lamentable, misfortunes, treachery, deceive, obstacles, maliciously, dissimulation,* "so much suffering, so many regrets, and so many tears" (7–8). There is nothing joyous, fulfilling, fun, or sexy about love in *Astrea*; instead, love is a battlefield, an onerous task filled with obstacles, often calling for deception and ruses, a rigid regime with ridiculous rules, impossibly high standards, and with endless deferrals of gratification even for those who make it through the obstacle course. In the opening scene, Astrea and Celadon deceive their parents, Celadon deceives the girl he flirts with, Astrea is deceived by her treacherous informant, and Celadon—in strict obedience to the courtly rules of love—attempts suicide. Deception, disappointment, despair: these are the dire punishments for anyone who falls in love in *Astrea*, whose narrative consists of dozens of variations on this dismal theme.

When Celadon dives into the Lignon, he launches one narrative arc: instead of drowning, he washes up unconscious on the other side of the river and is rescued by three "nymphs," as the aristocratic daughters of the region are called. They secretly nurture him back to health, smuggle him out of their castle in women's clothing, and reluctantly release him into the wild, where he becomes a heartbroken, long-haired hermit. The chief druid of Forez, named Adamas, convinces him to return to civilization by way of a ruse, by dressing up as his absent daughter, a druidess-in-training named Alexis. No stranger to transvestism, Celadon agrees: this way, he can return to his beloved without violating her command because it is not Celadon but "Alexis" who will enjoy Astrea's company. Distraught ever since she drove Celadon to suicide, Astrea is instinctively attracted to Alexis and finds her a

suitable surrogate for her lost love. They share sleeping quarters with other shepherdesses, during which time Alexis gets several more eyefuls of his beloved *en déshabillé* and is able to fondle her to his heart's content, which she returns with what can only be called lesbian enthusiasm. (These "girl"-on-girl scenes are quite explicit and outraged some 17th-century readers.) Eventually—by which I mean 2,000 pages later—Celadon reveals his ruse, but instead of being relieved to learn her beloved lives, Astrea banishes him *again* for endangering her reputation. Not until near the end of volume 5 are they reconciled. (The abridged editions of the novel available today in France deal only with this story-line, as does Eric Rohmer's pretty film *The Romance of Astrea and Celadon* [2007].)

A second, more complex narrative arc concerns the many affairs of Galathée, the haughtiest of the three nymphs who rescued Celadon and daughter of Amasis, queen of Forez. (Her name was probably taken from Cervantes' Galatea.) This humorless princess was once involved with a nobleman named Polémas, but dumped him for another knight. Polémas is the villain of the piece, and helps expand *Astrea* from a pastoral to a Dumasian adventure novel of royal intrigue and treachery. Conniving to win Galathée back, he enlists a fake druid to convince her she will meet her future soul-mate on the banks of the Lignon at a specific time, which happens to be the moment when Galathée and the other nymphs rescue Celadon. The swain's rustic sex appeal overrides her keen sense of social superiority and she makes a pass at him, but Celadon rejects her in devotion to Astrea. (She then mocks his ideals and argues that infidelity among consenting adults is no big deal.) Frustrated Polémas, determined to possess both Galathée and the queendom she will inherit, eventually leads an army against Amasis' castle, where many of the novels' characters have gathered for protection and defense—Celadon joins the fray while still in druidess drag—and after many battle scenes Polémas is defeated and beheaded. This exciting castle siege would be the climax of any other novel, but in *Astrea* it's just one more skirmish in the endless battle between the sexes.

Several other narrative arcs are generated from Forez's reputation as a pastoral getaway, and as the site of the oracular Fountain of Love's Truth. Many characters show up and tell their stories, often asking for a wise shepherdess or one of the "nymphs" to act as judge in romantic disputes. As the novel progresses, these interpolated stories grow longer and more

complicated; some are broken up into installments narrated by different characters over long intervals, enacting on a formal level the delayed gratifications its characters endure, but putting impossible demands on the reader's memory. (Even d'Urfé specialists admit getting lost occasionally in the labyrinthine narrative.) These characters arrive from all over Europe, and their stories combine actual historical events (like the assassination of Roman emperor Valentinian III in 455) with romantic adventures familiar from earlier novels. For these subplots, d'Urfé drew upon ancient Greek romances, chivalric novels, Italian novellas, history chronicles, fairy tales, and story-cycle novels (especially the *Heptameron*), resulting in a veritable anthology of premodern narrative forms. These stories—which, when combined with the backstories of other Forez denizens, make up the bulk of the novel—are all variants of Celadon and Astrea's messy situation: jealousy and misunderstanding, ruses that backfire, unrequited love, and other vexations.

Most of the 200 or so characters in *Astrea* talk about love,[4] but the novel has two principal theorists on the subject. Silvandre, abandoned as a child but raised as an aristocratic soldier/scholar, arrives in Forez shortly before the novel opens to take up the shepherd's life. A brooder apparently indifferent to women, he is reluctantly persuaded to court a friend of Astrea's named Diane in competition with Philis, another of Astrea's friends, a game to see who can play the more devoted lover. (Philis adopts male courtship rituals, adding to the gender confusion that runs throughout this transgressive novel.) Schooled in Renaissance Platonism—though ostensibly set in the 5th century, the novel's worldview is late Renaissance—Silvandre advocates a highly spiritual form of love, a view held by most of the females in the novel, who want to be "served" per the rules of courtly love, not tumbled in a haystack like real shepherdesses. Opposing him is another recent arrival in Forez, the freethinking, fun-loving Hylas, who takes a cavalier, love 'em-and-leave 'em approach to women. "I have loved more than a hundred shepherdesses," he admits, and "have said farewell to some before I left them, and left the others without saying anything at all," adding, "I have been shared by several at once" (233). These two engage in numerous debates, and while most of the novel's characters regard Hylas as a clever heckler against Silvandre's noble pronouncements, the novel's

narrator doesn't take sides, and in fact is careful not to let Hylas be defeated in debate or otherwise disgraced. Like Don Quixote and Sancho Panza, Silvandre and Hylas represent two worldviews; the former is a man of the past, drawing uncritically upon 2,000 years of idealistic philosophy to form his views, while Hylas is a surprisingly modern type. He is disarmingly frank, witty, irreverent, unconventional, and unapologetic in his preference for carnal love over spiritual. (He is also the only character described with any degree of specificity: only about 21, he is balding with red hair.) As it happens, Hylas hooks up with a merry young widow named Stelle who shares his views, and they are about the only happy couple in the book.

A fan favorite of the early readers of *Astrea*, Hylas is a character type who will play an increasingly large role in French fiction: the libertine.[5] The term originally designated a person who insisted on freedom of thought in religious matters (John Calvin used it against dissenters), then spread to those who favored reason and natural law over theology and faith, and/or expressed skepticism toward metaphysics and abstract philosophy (like Montaigne, who has been called a libertine), and only later did the term come to describe a dissolute pleasure-seeker. (The most extreme example of the libertine is the Marquis de Sade, the learned monster ominously waiting for us at the end of this long chapter.) Far from being a mere womanizer or "jester," as some critics have called him, Hylas emerges as the most sensible character in the novel, and perhaps a spokesman for d'Urfé's views. The author often has Hylas deflate Silvandre's lofty views by literalizing them, as in this exchange over the spiritual union of true lovers' souls:

> "Though you have puzzled my brains with your discourse," said Hylas, "yet you cannot demonstrate unto me that a lover is changed into the loved, since there is one part left out, which is the body."
>
> "The body," said Silvandre, "is not a part but only an organ or instrument of the soul, and if the soul of Philis were separated from her body, would it not be said there is the body of Philis and not Philis herself?" . . .
>
> "If it be so," said Hylas, "that the body is but the instrument which Philis maketh use of, I will give you that Philis and let me have the rest,

and see whether you or I shall be better contented." (1:307)

Silvandre can have Philis's soul; Hylas will take her body. Similarly, the narrator salaciously literalizes the union of souls when Alexis (Celadon) wakes one morning and accidentally puts on Astrea's dress: "Love . . . produced enormous happiness in this false Alexis, from wearing the dress of her beloved shepherdess, so much so that unable to take it off, she began to kiss it and to press it affectionately against her body, . . . [Then "she"] "approached the bed where Astrée was sleeping, and kneeling down, began to worship her."[6] Wearing his girlfriend's clothes is obviously an erotic experience for Celadon, and I imagine one of his hands was busy while he was down there on his knees "worshiping" the half-naked sleeping beauty. (When Astrea wakes to find Alexis in her dress, she plays along and climbs into Alexis' druidess habit!) I don't think autoerotic transvestism is what Renaissance Platonists had in mind when describing the spiritual union of lovers, and since this scene (and others like it) comes from the narrator rather than Hylas, it's not a stretch to identify one with the other, especially when biographical matters are taken into account.

Forced at age 13 into the Order of Malta, which included a vow of chastity, d'Urfé became fascinated as a teenager with his older sister-in-law, the rich and beautiful Diane de Châteaumorand. He began planning his novel in the 1580s, partly under her spell and that of Montemayor's *Diana*, and when his older brother's marriage to Diane was annulled in 1599, d'Urfé got released from the chaste order a month later and married her in 1600. But the marriage didn't go well; his diplomatic duties in Savoy meant long absences from her, and in 1614 they separated for good. Thereafter living alone in his castle in Virieu-le-Grand, writing the remainder of his long novel, his attitudes toward love must have undergone a sea-change from those idealistic yearnings of a chaste youth. Hence the heavy air of unhappiness that hangs over *Astrea* until the final page (when the novel's various sparring partners are married off in a perfunctory manner), hence the recurring metaphors aligning love with illness, poison, shipwreck, and madness.

Like Cervantes, d'Urfé straddled two eras, one foot in the old world of chivalry and idealism, the other in the brave new world of epistemological

uncertainty and moral relativism. Forez may have been a nostalgic dream-world for Catholic noblemen like d'Urfé—and many of his aristocratic readers took it that way—but it is also a pagan matriarchy with considerable prejudice against patriarchal authority (fathers, husbands, kings, occasionally even the gods) and where male aggression is considered the root of all evil. Though characters like Silvandre and Adamas voice idealistic ideologies of love so persuasive that many 17th-century readers regarded *Astrea* as a handbook to amorous conduct, d'Urfé consistently undercuts their arguments. Scoffing Hylas is their most vocal opponent, but Galathée too mocks family values, warning against the trap of matrimony (in a society where divorce was not an option) and praising open relationships. And then there is the questionable behavior of the "perfect lovers," Celadon and Astrea. Celadon takes the codes of ideal love so seriously that he first attempts suicide, then retreats from civilization, refusing to reveal himself to grieving Astrea (even though he knows she regrets her jealous fit) because she has not *formally* rescinded her original command "never to present yourself before me unless I command you to do so" (10). He obeys the letter of the law while violating its spirit, punishing his beloved with passive aggression, and is suckered by Adamas's sophistry into thinking that by disguising himself as Alexis he can technically evade her command. Celadon is meant to exemplify the ideal lover whose constancy is unmatched, but should we really admire a suicidal, passive-aggressive, crossdressing voyeur who is such a stickler for an antiquated code that he would make his beloved's life miserable? He is as daft as Don Quixote.[7]

And she's no better. *She* suggests he flirt with another girl, then gets upset when he does (trusting a conniving friend over Celadon's protests of innocence), and when he finally reveals himself near the end, Astrea throws another fit and banishes him *again*! Her case is more interesting: the narrator drops many clues suggesting the inexperienced 16-year-old fears adult sexuality, and banishes Celadon on flimsy pretexts in order to postpone the loss of her virginity. This is the obvious interpretation of a nightmare Astrea relates in part 4, where she enters "a thicket heavy with trees and brambles [whose] thorns, after ripping all my clothes, . . . pierced my skin at every jab" (trans. Horowitz, 120). She is much more erotic in the

arms of Alexis than she ever was with Celadon, and Astrea suggests joining her in a druid convent for the rest of their lives. It's worth noting her name comes from the Greek goddess Astraea, who inhabited Earth during the Golden Age but left when mortals began engaging in Adult Situations and was metamorphosed into the constellation Virgo—the Virgin.[8] A vapid virgin with lesbian tendencies afraid to grow up—she's as poor a model for the perfect lover as Celadon.

The dozens of other characters who try to live up to the ideals of true love likewise fail, usually dragged down by their own fears, jealousies, and egos. The only exceptions are unconventional couples: in part 2 we're given the story of a rich man named Thamire who falls in love with a cute little shepherdette named Celidée when she is only nine years old. He begins courting her—"I would sometimes steal a kiss, sometimes put my hand into her bosom, and indeed, great nymph [Galathée's sister Leonide, to whom he is relating the story], so tampered with her that I did extremely win upon her affection, for when she came to be eleven years of age, she loved me, as she herself said, as well as she did her father" (1:208)—and plans to marry her when she's a few years older. Then his 18-year-old nephew returns from abroad, a strapping lad named Calidon, who predictably falls for the beautiful girl. (She doesn't care for him at all, citing an "antipathy in nature.") Disgusted at the rift between uncle and nephew her beauty has caused, Celidée defaces herself with a diamond ring. At the sight of the mutilated girl, Calidon's "fiery flaming passion did quite extinguish" (1:382) and he leaves her to his uncle, who is saddened but unshaken in his love for her and marries her anyway. Throughout the rest of the novel, Thamire's devotion to her *inner* beauty is held up as a shining example of constancy, the defining feature of love according to most of its characters. Celidée's face is magically restored at the end of the novel, but it makes no difference in their relationship, the only happy couple in the entire novel except for Hylas and Stelle. What are we to make, then, of an encyclopedic study of love where the only two couples who express and enjoy true love are a pair of swingers and a transgenerational couple consisting of a child-molester and a tween cutter? Where the novel's two principal theorists of ideal love are an unmarried druid and a wanderer uninterested in women? Where transvestism is routine and gender as fluid as the Lignon river?

Where didactic lectures on metaphysical love are followed by erotic descriptions of the physical allure of certain nymphs and shepherdesses? *Astrea*'s reputation as a lofty paean to spiritual love is misleading; like so many of its characters, the novel wears a disguise, pretending to advocate Platonic ideals while subverting them and suggesting unconventional alternatives.

Disguise has been a standard plot device in novels from the beginning, of course, but the extensive use d'Urfé makes of disguises and pretenses creates a world where nobody is who he or she seems to be. A woman might be a man in drag, a visored knight a young lady, a shepherd a nobleman, a druid a conman, a beseeching lover a lying bastard. There are dozens of instances of crossdressing, more than I've ever come across in a single novel; there are two lookalikes named Ligdamon and Lydias whose resemblance causes much confusion; there are two boys switched at birth, and a baby girl who is raised as a boy until adulthood (and prefers male freedom); and virtually everyone who comes to Forez adopts shepherds' garb, making it impossible to distinguish them from the real ones. Some characters are unknowingly disguised—they turn out to be the offspring of someone other than they thought—and then there are the countless pretenses and counterfeit behavior. A more dissembling cast would be hard to find in fiction, which makes Hylas's candor so startling and refreshing. But d'Urfé is not, like Gaddis in *The Recognitions*, exposing a counterfeit society; Celadon ponders "how uncertain were the fortunes of love, as uncertain as other kinds of fortune" (52), and it's uncertainty that is d'Urfé's grand theme. Writing during a paradigm shift when scientific advances were unsettling old certainties, when people were abandoning their places in the great chain of being, when gender was revealed to be as much social construction as biological essence, when there was a "gradual turning from cosmology toward psychology as the source of personality identity,"[9] when thinkers were calling virtually everything into question, d'Urfé envelops his 5th-century characters in the fog of uncertainty that was settling onto sensitive 17th-century readers. Cherpack warns the modern reader not to view *Astrea*'s "discords as symptomatic of the tortured *Zeitgeist* in which the author was immersed" (333), but the unusual prevalence of disguise in the work, the puzzlement over oracles and the intentions of the gods, the

misinterpretations virtually every character makes—all far exceed the norm for traditional fiction. Only nine years separate the concluding volume of *Astrea* from Descartes' *Discourse on the Method* (1637), which grapples with the same epistemological uncertainties. D'Urfé masterfully harmonizes the routine misunderstandings that generate the plot-lines of pastorals and romantic novels with the changing intellectual temper of his time, which is one reason he avoided certainty and closure in his novel for as long as possible, leaving it to his secretary to supply the generic happy ending.

Despite its intellectual subtlety, *Astrea* is sometimes clunky in its literary execution. There are countless violations of point-of-view as its various narrators tell their tales, revealing details they couldn't possibly know; the narrator often stage-directs his characters as though they're in a play, making them pace back and forth and clutch their brow to signal indecision, for example. There's some lazy plotting and a hazy chronology. Everyone speaks in the same sophisticated register as the narrator, though this can be excused since the novel makes no pretense to realism, and its anachronisms can likewise be attributed to d'Urfé's transhistorical agenda. Many of the subplots are similar, which gives *Astrea* more the quality of a long-running, open-ended soap opera rather than a contained work of theme and variations, and add to the unwieldly bulkiness of the novel. D'Urfé was self-conscious of its size and often has his narrators apologize and insist they are keeping their stories as short as possible, but only his death halted the massive flow of words. In this regard, it must be admitted, d'Urfé is typically French: *Astrea* is actually shorter than such medieval French novels as the *Lancelot-Grail* and *Perceforest*, though after the 17th-century fad for giganticism d'Urfé inspired faded, French writers would return to this supersizing tendency with their immense *romans-fleuves* (literally "river novels"), like Balzac's and Zola's multivolume fiction cycles, Rolland's *Jean-Christophe*, Proust's *In Search of Lost Time*, and later cycles by Roger Martin du Gard and Jules Romains. Jacques Roubaud's recent *"great fire of London"* cycle occupies six volumes, or "branches," harking back to those medieval meganovels.

On the other hand, *Astrea*'s interpolated tales are much better integrated into the text than those in *Don Quixote* or earlier pastoral novels; as the fearsomely monikered Edward Baron Turk notes, "d'Urfé enormously

advanced the structural form of the modern French novel by synthesizing the juxtaposed commentaries of discrete stories in works like the *Heptaméron* with the stories themselves. . . ."[10] The reader blessed with an elephant's memory watches in amazement as dozens of far-flung stories eventually link up, as characters from one subplot interact with those from another narrated many hundreds of pages earlier, resulting in an elaborate construction not unlike the garden described early in part 1, "which was supplied with all the rarities the place allowed, fountains and terraces, and lanes and bowers, nothing having been left out that artifice could add. On leaving this place one entered a large wood with various kinds of trees; in one quarter there were nut-trees, which all together formed such a graceful labyrinth that even though the paths twisted and led into each other in the most confusing way, they were still delightful because of the shade" (28–29). Indeed, readers found *Astrea* so delightful "it was read aloud in fashionable gatherings, sometimes attended by nobles dressed as one or another of the characters," translator Rendall informs us (xv). But in the same way blood in the water attracts sharks, its bloodless abstractions and artificiality quickly attracted satirists.

The Extravagant Shepherd by Charles Sorel (1597?–1674) was published the same year as volume 4 of *Astrea* (1627) and mocks it and other pastoral novels, hoping to put an end to such productions. Like many satirists, Sorel was a reformer at heart. A Parisian bourgeois with pretensions to nobility, he felt most things needed radical improvement: manners, morals, education, the censorship imposed by totalitarian Cardinal Richelieu in the 1620s, the French Academy—which was established in 1635 at Richelieu's suggestion but never invited Sorel to join—and, later in life, the way history and science were written. As a later French novelist put it, "had he been called to counsel at the Creation, we should have seen things very unlike what they are at present."[11] But as a young man, he first took on the French novel; as one critic dramatically puts it, "Sorel's most enduring concern was the reform of literature which required as a first step the destruction of the contemporary novel" (Suozzo, 11).

The most popular genres when Sorel was growing up were the *roman sentimental*—flowery romance novels—and pulp fiction exploiting "monstrous crimes and unnatural passions often based on news items."[12]

Novels of chivalry were still popular, as were romantic adventure stories, most of them conventional, derivative works. (The latter were predictable imitations of ancient Greek novels, many of which had been translated into French by this time.) Young Sorel was much more impressed by Cervantes' iconoclastic approach to fiction, especially the realism in the *Exemplary Stories*, and began his own quixotic quest to reform French fiction by ridiculing its current modes. He first went after the romantic adventure novel in his own *Histoire amoreuse de Cleagenor et de Doristée* (The Romance of Cleagenor and Doristée, 1621). Sorel throws in all the staples of such fiction—parental disapproval, abduction, disguises, attempted rape—but pushes them to ludicrous lengths, especially the use of countless coincidences and disguises (probably a swipe at the disguise-heavy *Astrea*). But among his innovations are a rational outlook (no supernatural or miraculous elements) and a wider register of language. Unlike *Astrea*, where everyone sounds alike, Sorel's peasants talk like peasants; base seducers wilt the appeal of flowery language; and he uses a playful, punning style that mocks the humorless, stilted manner of his models.

He followed this with what one critic has called "an experiment in formal and thematic variation" (Verdier 21). *Le Palais d'Angelie* (1622) is a lengthy frame-tale novel—enclosing five novellas narrated over five days at Angelie's country-house outside Paris—with a higher degree of interaction between the frame and the tales than usual in that genre. They are very contemporary and realistic, both in circumstantial detail and setting, and the five novellas vary in formal presentation. (One is even incomplete, and there are other uncertainties left unanswered.) Next, inspired by Cervantes' Spanish novellas, Sorel published *Les Nouvelles françoises* (French Novellas, 1623). As the title indicates, this was Sorel's attempt to establish a distinctly French kind of fiction: it would be more realistic in setting and language, seek a middle ground between high-flown romances and bawdy Boccaccian tales, give French names (rather than Greek) to its characters, challenge hidebound social hierarchies and traditional values, and in Sorel's case would feature "the omniscient narrator's frequent intrusions within the stories themselves to explain their unconventional aspects" (Verdier, 25). Most literary historians agree the qualities that define the "classic" French novel beginning with Lafayette's *Princess de Clèves* (1678) originated with Sorel's innovations in this collection.

In late 1622 or early 1623, Sorel also published the first of the two novels that earn him a privileged place in the history of innovative fiction. *The Comical History of Francion* (*Histoire comique de Francion*), a 700-page "comic novel": a new genre that Sorel felt was needed to supplant the overly serious French fiction of the time. *Francion* is the anti-*Astrea*: it is bawdy where *Astrea* is chaste, set mostly in cities rather than the country, realistic rather than idealistic, modern rather than historical, and linguistically diverse rather than consistently formal. Their literary inspirations couldn't be more different: while d'Urfé traveled the high road of Greek romances, novels of chivalry, pastorals, and idealistic philosophy, Sorel took the low road of Roman satires (the protagonist's servant is named Petronius), medieval jestbooks, racy tales from the *Decameron*, carnivalesque satires like *Solomon and Marcolf* and *Gargantua and Pantagruel* (which earns Sorel a few pages in Bakhtin's *Rabelais and His World* [103–5]), Spanish picaresque novels (*Lazarillo* and *Guzman* are name-checked in the text), and libertine philosophy. I don't have to tell you which is more fun to read.

Francion's unusual publication history forced Sorel to revise his novel into a more complex work than he originally intended. The first edition (only a single copy of which survives) consisted of seven chapters, breaking off mid-incident, and was published anonymously because of its near-pornographic content and language. After Richelieu clamped down on the libertines, Sorel in 1626 published an expanded edition of 11 chapters, cleaning the X-rated first edition up to an R-rated work, and prefacing chapters with commentary on his aesthetics. Seven years later, Sorel added the lengthy 12th and final chapter for a definitive edition called *La Vraye* [True] *histoire comique de Francion*, working the prefatory material into the body of the text, and ascribing the revised work to a minor novelist named Nicolas Moulinet du Parc, who had died a decade earlier. Sorel pretends du Parc got tired of writing sappy romances for the ladies and decided to write a big, bawdy picaresque. (Sorel never did acknowledge the novel as his own, though everyone knew.) What began as a youthful farce ended up as a middle-aged concession to maturity.

Rather than beginning with the protagonist's birth and upbringing, as in most picaresques, *Francion*'s opening pages are mystifying but hilarious. Outside his castle walls, an old aristocrat is conducting a nighttime magic

ritual to restore his sexual potency while his sexy young wife Laurette awaits a visit by 20-something Francion, who had conned the cuckold into following his magic recipe to get him out of the way. But as he climbs the ladder to Laurette's room, our hero is knocked unconscious by some thieves who happen to be burglarizing the castle—their inside man is dressed like a servant girl—and Laurette has sex instead with one of the burglars; more hijinks ensue until the transvestite servant "girl" gets hung upside-down on the castle wall with his genitals exposed to the villagers the next morning, when the aristocrat is found tied to a tree, convinced that devils attacked him. Not until the second half of the chapter does the reader learn from Francion how all this came about, a narrative strategy Sorel pursues throughout the novel—mystification followed by clarification—enacting at a formal level Francion's growth as a person. As critic Andrew G. Suozzo notes, "The whole movement of the novel, thanks to its dramatic opening, becomes one of progress from ignorance and illusion to a clear, nearly cynical understanding of the world" (14). In the second chapter, Francion meets an old woman who provides further background: as she tells the long story of her life as a *pícara,* we learn she happens to be the bawd who raised Laurette to be a whorish gold-digger. At the same time Francion meets a nobleman who invites him to recuperate at his castle in Burgundy. Not until chapter 3 does Francion take control of the narrative, first recounting an extraordinary dream revealing his sexual anxieties before launching into the story of his own life—another instance of mystification followed by clarification.

The son of a marquis, Francion la Porte is a bright boy who eventually leaves Brittany to be educated in Paris; rather than suffering at school like Pablos in *The Swindler*, Francion takes advantage of his pedantic schoolmaster Hortensius, the victim of his many pranks throughout the novel. (He was based on a minor writer named Jean-Louis Guez de Balzac, whom Sorel loathed.) Francion tells us how he endured poverty after leaving school, of his development as a writer, how he joins a group of libertines, and the difficulties he had finding a patron until he joined the entourage of a nobleman named Clérante, with whom he participates in a week-long orgy at another nobleman's castle. Earlier at school, Francion had seen a portrait of an Italian lady named Nays (Naïs), a spiritual contrast to slutty Laurette (whom he encounters at the orgy, making up for the

missed opportunity that opened the novel), and when Sorel expanded the novel for the second edition it was to track Francion's quest to be united with this ideal woman. Two Italian rivals for her hand trick and imprison Francion, and after he escapes he lays low for a while, playing at being a shepherd and a traveling mountebank before resuming his quest for Nays. Militantly antimarriage in the earlier part of the novel, the older Francion realizes his uncertain social status and financial situation would be best settled by marriage to this noblewoman. The long 12th chapter Sorel added for the 1633 edition postpones this with a subplot set in Rome in which Francion flirts with a virginal girl named Emilie and is arrested and tried for counterfeiting by his Italian rivals, which causes Nays to forsake him. (As in the first chapter, Francion isn't present during much of the final chapter. Things happen *to* him; he's not in control.) But he is vindicated—he was set up both by counterfeiters and counterfeit virgin Emilie—so Nays forgives him and the novel ends with their marriage.

Falling in love with a portrait, a last-act courtroom scene, and marriage on the final page are all staples from the romantic fiction Sorel ostensibly mocks in the first half of the novel, just as Francion's aristocratic birth departs from the picaresque tradition. Subverting genre expectations, Sorel mixes up plot elements from different fiction traditions for something new, a romantic novel grounded in sordid reality, and/or a picaresque about a well-born intellectual swindler who isn't as smart or noble as he thinks he is. No earlier romantic novel was as lewd as this, no picaresque as learned. *Francion* is filled with discussions of novels, reflecting Sorel's own preoccupation with the validity of the genre. (After he gave up novel-writing, he produced two works of literary criticism, *La Bibliothèque françoise* [1664] and *De la connoissance des bons livres* [1671].) When Francion is slumming as a shepherd, he encounters an educated woman named Joconde who is reading a novel that sounds like *Astrea*, and which exasperates her,

> for I delight altogether in reality which I cannot find in any of the histories in this book, although peradventure there may be some appearances for it. Shepherds are here as philosophers, and make love in the same manner as accomplished courtiers in the world, but to what purpose is this? Why doth not the author give to these personages the

> qualities of knights well-educated? He makes them the miracles of eloquence and prudence which in men of their condition is prodigious. A history true or fabulous ought to represent things as near to nature as possibly may be; otherwise, it serves but as a tale only to entertain children in a chimney corner, and not ingenious spirits whose apprehension pierces through all things. We may see here the method and order of the world turned topsy-turvy.[13]

A few pages earlier, the narrator had praised his own book's realism and frank language, yet Francion tells Joconde that he himself is a nobleman in shepherd's garb who writes pastoral poetry and conducts himself like a character out of d'Urfé's novel. On the one hand, he defends the veracity of unrealistic pastoral novels, but on the other he pours scorn on peasants and country living. Confounding matters further, the most enthusiastic advocate for novels is the ridiculous pedant Hortensius, who wants to expand their subject matter. He first describes some sci-fi novels he plans to write—one of which inspired Cyrano de Bergerac a generation later—and then predicts the realistic, mercantile novels of the 19th century: "The romances shall be no more of love and war only, but they shall contain as well subjects of law, of merchandise, and of receipts of the exchequer. In this course of affairs, there shall be daily brave and new adventures. . . . In this manner, the draper shall make romances on his traffic and the advocate on his practice" (11). Sorel condemns novels in a novel that is as extravagant as anything Hortensius plans to write. As Joconde said, "We may see here the method and order of the world turned topsy-turvy," as Sorel does everything he can to discredit novels, by way of a novel. This is why Sorel's *macédoine* has been called "an 'antinovel,' a work that challenges literary tradition and questions its own status as fiction" (Verdier, 57).

Francion is a major development in the art of the novel, retooling medieval carnivalesque fiction for modern, more sophisticated uses. Its protagonist is neither a hero nor a scoundrel, but an all-too-human character who is bright, generous, and anxious to prove his worth, but held back by social prejudices and self-doubt—Francion occasionally poses as a mountebank, a role that fits him a little too well—and is often duped by those he considers his intellectual inferiors, especially the women he lusts

after. His marriage at the end is a compromise, not a victorious validation as in traditional novels, and his contempt for peasants is matched only by his contempt for nobility, the very class to which he aspires. (He values merit, not class.) He's as frank as his name implies, but Francion's road to self-discovery doesn't end with the conclusion of the novel; he has a long way to go. The novel itself is a riot of delights: it's very funny in parts, very bawdy (especially that week-long orgy), very detailed and visceral in its rendition of physical matters, very inventive in its use of slang, dialect, and verb tenses (according to those who have read the original), very erudite, very metafictional, very liberal (anti-war, pro-sex), and very clever in its unctuous use of pious moralizing to excuse depictions of lewd behavior. Moreover, Francion's lengthy dream in book 3 is astonishing: it reads more like a sequence in Coover's *Lucky Pierre* than something out of a 17th-century novel. Though Sorel didn't destroy the contemporary French novel, he certainly gave it a much-needed kick in the *derrière*—or *cul*, as he crudely calls it.

Francion promises to write a satirical novel based on his pastoral experiences, an intertextual reference to Sorel's other major novel, *The Extravagant Shepherd* (*Le Berger extravagant*), which was published anonymously in three installments in 1627–28 in an unusual form. Over a thousand pages long (nearly 3,000 in the small-format original), about two-thirds is a narrative in 14 chapters, and the rest a critical commentary (*Remarques*) on the novel by Sorel himself. The novel's purpose was made clearer when he issued a revised version in 1633–34 bluntly retitled *L'anti-roman* (The Antinovel).[14] Sorel opposed the prevailing trends in fiction—not only pastorals like *Astrea* but generic romances and adventure stories (the usual best-selling fare)—and offers an antidote, hoping to laugh them out of favor by exposing the exhausted literary traditions they exploited and the dangers they pose to naive readers. (Remember, Sorel was writting at a time when fops ands foppettes were dressing up as their favorite characters from *Astrea* in the salons of Paris.) The result, as Gabrielle Verdier describes it, "is an enormous parodic encyclopedia of forms and themes offering the historian a wealth of information on the state of literature in the 1620s and on the evolution toward classicism" (64).

A travesty of *Astrea*, *The Extravagant Shepherd* more closely resembles *Don Quixote*. A silly young Parisian named Louis loves pastoral novels so much he confuses them with reality, leaves for the western suburb of Saint-Cloud, buys a flock of mangy sheep, and begins to live the pastoral life under the poetic name Lysis. Per the novels he regards as gospel, he selects a plain-looking maid named Catherine for his ideal love, renaming her Charite, and mystifies the simple girl with high-flown declarations of love. His cousin Adrian—a conventional, unimaginative bourgeois—tries to lure him back to Paris, where he plans to commit him to a madhouse, but a sophisticated Parisian visitor named Anselme, out looking for laughs, volunteers to watch over Lysis and lead him back to sanity. Telling Lysis he is taking him down to *Astrea*'s Forez, he actually transports him to the Brie region east of Paris; the bulk of the novel consists of the elaborate pranks Anselme and the local gentry play on deluded Lysis, encouraging his folly much as the duke and duchess do in the second part of *Don Quixote*. After this summer vacation, the gentry decide to cure Lysis of his bibliomania via a no-nonsense intellectual named Clarimond, who convinces Lysis that he has been duped by irresponsible writers. Chastened and sad, Louis marries Catherine (whose disdainful attitude toward him changes when she learns he's rich) and settles into the conventional life of a country gentleman.

It's easy enough for a talented author to parody any stylized genre, and Sorel hits all the obvious targets. When Lysis encounters his first real shepherd, he approaches him "with a gesture as courteous as if it had been Celadon or Sylvander" and asks him, "Doest thou think on the cruelty of Clorinda? How long is it since thou hast made any song for her? Prithee show me some of thy verses."[15] By *vers*, the baffled bumpkin thinks he means *vers de terre* (earthworms) and regards the fancy-talking outsider as an evil spirit. At a mountainside, "calling to mind that in the books he had read, the shepherds did interrogate the Echo in such places as that" (1), Lysis asks the oracular nymph for advice, only to hear scandalous double-entendres. (We later learn Anselme was impersonating Echo.) He attacks a "satyr" (a peasant) whom he catches kisses Charite; serves as judge in a love dispute (there are several of these, mocking those in *Astrea*); attends a play and—like Don Quixote at the puppet show—climbs onstage to participate; dresses as a young woman to be nearer Charite, only to be

accused of promiscuity and nearly burned at the stake as a witch; is "metamorphosed" into a weeping willow and meets what he thinks are nymphs and river-gods; entertains visitors and swallows their exotic stories (more of the gentry having fun with him); participates in an adventure that he's convinced includes flying horses, giants, and a dragon; fakes a suicide so that he can be resurrected by Charite's healing eyes; and all the while asks his companions to takes notes for the pastoral romance that will surely be written about him. It's all great fun, with many LOL moments.

In addition to taking the topoi of pastorals seriously, Lysis takes their figurative language literally. He assumes the sun reluctantly sets because Charite emits more light, making him superfluous, and that the flames in her eyes can literally start fires. Many of the pranks the gentry play on him involve literalizing the imagery of pastoral songs and the romantic conceits used in sentimental novels, along with the classical mythology from which their tropes are drawn. Since Anselme has seen Charite—she's the maid to a woman he is courting—he offers to engrave her portrait for Lysis, who is shocked when he sees the hideous result. But as Anselme explains,

> "Do not you see that I have done all according to your directions, and that I have represented all the features of Charite's beauty in the same manner as you have expressed them to me?" Whereupon Lysis, discovering the artifice of the excellent painter, began to observe in order all the parts of the picture, which had amazed him when at first sight he beheld them all confusedly. Anselme had in this business acted a piece of ingenious knavery; observing what the shepherd told him of the beauty of his mistress, and imitating the extravagant descriptions of the poets, he had painted a face which, instead of being flesh color, was of a complexion white as snow. There were two branches of coral at the opening of the mouth, and upon each cheek a lily and a rose, crossing one another. Where there should have been eyes, there was neither white nor apple, but two suns sending forth beams, among which were observed certain flames and darts. The eyebrows were black as ebony, and were made like two bows, where the painter had not forgotten to express the holding-place in the middle that they might the better be observed. Above that was the forehead, smooth as a piece of ice, at the top of which was Love [Cupid], like a little child, seated in his throne.

> And to add perfection to the work, the hair floated about all this in diverse manners: some of it was made like chains of gold, some other twisted and made like networks, and in many places there hanged lines, with hooks already baited. There were many hearts taken with the bait, and one bigger than all the rest, which hanged down below the left cheek, so that it seemed to supply the place of a pendant to that rare beauty. (2)[16]

Instead of realizing how ridiculous standard romantic imagery is, Lysis is delighted at this "picture by metaphor." Thirty years earlier, Shakespeare had rejected such diction by admitting

> My mistress's eyes are nothing like the sun,
> Coral is far more red than her lips' red;
> If snow be white, why then her breasts are dun;
> If hairs be wires, black wires grow on her head.
> I have seen roses damasked, red and white,
> But no such roses see I in her cheeks, . . . (Sonnet 130)

Sorel was appalled that contemporary authors were still flogging these dead metaphors in their novels, and they—more than silly but harmless Lysis—are the principal target of his satire. He names names of recent offenders—not only d'Urfé's *Astrea* but forgotten novels like Ollénix du Mont-Sacré's *Bergeries de Juliette* (1585–98), Vital d'Audiguier's *Lisandre et Caliste* (1615), Coste's *Bergeries de Vesper* (1618), and Molière d'Essertines's *Polyxène* (1623)—but also traces the problem back to classical fantasists like Homer, Virgil, and especially Ovid, whose *Metamorphoses* is mocked throughout. As John Barth argued in his seminal essay "The Literature of Exhaustion" (1967), metaphors and tropes lose their pizazz after a while and need to be replaced by new ones, not endlessly recycled. Sorel felt the classical literary heritage had not only become exhausted by the 1620s, but made redundant by advances in science and historiography.

He put most of these arguments in the mouth of Clarimond, who delivers a lengthy tirade against fanciful literature in chapter 13.[17] He begins with a scathing attack on Homer, where one can "find all the fopperies imaginable," then slashes and burns his way through Virgil, Ovid, Ariosto,

Tasso, France's own Pierre de Ronsard and other poets, then doubles back to condemn unrealistic novels, starting with ancient Greek romances and working his way through pastorals, chivalric novels, and ending with *Astrea*. A companion who has adopted the poetic name Philiris for the gentry's cosplaying adventures defends these works, arguing that Clarimond is taking books meant for entertainment too literally and seriously, and then a woman calling herself Amaryllis adds that romances are the only way women who are denied an education can learn about the world and how to conduct themselves in love affairs. (Ironic in one sense, given everything Sorel says against novels, but sadly true in another.) All of these arguments are presented to Anselme during a literary tribunal, an impressive display of Sorel's vast reading that anticipates the ancients versus the moderns debate that would occupy French and English intellectuals later in the century. Anselme equivocates, judging Clarimond too harsh and Philiris too lenient, though Sorel's attitude is closest to that of Clarimond, who takes on the task of bringing Lysis to his senses in the final chapter. He points out that Lysis's pagan-myth-based pastorals violate the tenets of Christianity, reveals the rational explanations behind his mystifying adventures, and argues that his bucolic pose has alienated Charite, not attracted her. Like Don Quixote, Lysis is illuminated by the light of reason and renounces his pastoral ways, but Sorel ends the novel on an ambiguous note: the only person who sides with Clarimond is dull, unimaginative cousin Adrian, and (like Francion) Lysis's capitulation to conventionality feels more like a defeat than a victory.

Sorel/Clarimond's principal complaint against fanciful novels is their repeated offenses against verisimilitude, so he makes sure his antinovel reeks of realism. As in *Francion*, there is lots of scatological humor as well as some brutally realistic scenes. Early in the novel, for example, a bridal party accompanies a wedded couple to their bedroom (a custom of the time), and when the lights unexpectedly go out, a servant takes advantage of the confusion to jump the bride and rape her. While Lysis's courtship of Charite is ludicrous, the mature affairs of the gentry are conducted in a believable manner, and peasants act peasantly, not like extras in a costume drama. Characters urinate and defecate in this novel, vomit and suffer hangovers. We're given a coarse example of French picaresque in chapter 8 when Lysis's Sancho Panzan servant Carmelin gives a lengthy account of

his hard life. (Of all the interpolated tales in the novel—all parodies of fashionable genres—this is the only one Clarimond approves of, because it is the only one that's realistic.) Given the sordid reality Sorel depicts, Lysis's retreat to the idealized world of pastoral is understandable and even admirable, for he insists on living in a nobler, self-made world, just as Don Quixote did—and without inflicting any violence, unlike the armed and dangerous Spaniard.

And like Cervantes, Sorel leads the game reader into a merry metafictional maze. Lysis is very self-conscious about being the hero of a future novel, and just to make sure he hasn't already been written up, he asks a bookseller if he stocks *The Loves of the Shepherd Lysis*; answered in the negative, he replies, "I am very glad on it, . . . you shall see such a thing one day" and promises it will be a best-seller (3; cf. Don Quixote's visit to a bookstore in *DQ*2). When the novel's gentry pretend to be shepherds like Lysis, we have fictional characters playing fictional characters, a situation doubled when these characters impersonate gods and nymphs and, later, agree to participate in the plays Lysis stages outdoors in chapter 9, piling artifice upon artifice. During these pageants, Lysis further blurs the distinction between art and life by insisting on using the natural world as a backdrop: "because, said he, sometimes they had to represent things done in diverse countries, he therefore desired that what was done in a village should be done in a village, and that which had been done on a mountain should be done on a mountain. . . . This was Lysis's way, and not to build upon the stage castles of pasteboard and to call the scene sometimes Thrace, sometimes Greece. You may easily perceive by these extraordinary imaginations that his desire was to come as near as he could to the truth" (9). All the world's a stage for Lysis, who incorporates a passing wagoneer into his play, refusing to make any distinction between life, truth, and art. Make that bad art, based on myths and fabrications, which pretends to be true. In his preface, the author explains that he has renamed his book "*The Anti-Romance*, and that because romances contain nothing but fictions, whereas this must be thought a true history," yet he concludes the novel by questioning its status:

> You have now all; it was in my design to tell you of the diverse fortunes of the shepherd Lysis, according to the notes I had of them from Philiris

> and Clarimond, who it seems had not leisure to put them into order. Lysis, having read some part of this, was nothing troubled to see his adventures made public because he believes, such as they are, they will be a testimony of the affection he ever bore Charite; and that besides, it will be an example for youth not to regulate their lives according to those impertinences [in novels] which are contrary to the order of the world. But because I speak to you of him as one that is still alive, I am in doubt whether many who shall read his history may not be guilty of a curiosity to go to Brie to see if they can find that so famous Lysis. Wherefore I give them notice that henceforth they shall not need take the pains, and that possibly they may not find him, because he is so changed that he hath left off that very name he was called when he was a shepherd. And besides, why may they not distrust me? What know they whether I have not related a fable to them instead of a true history, or that I have not, to disguise things, and not discover [reveal] the persons I have spoken of, as indeed I have called them by other than their ordinary names, and mistaken Brie for some other province? (14)

Thus we have a "true history" allegedly worked up from notes by two fictional characters, and vetted by the protagonist, which also pretends to be the work of the fictitious protagonist of *Francion*; like it, *The Extravagant Shepherd* was published anonymously, leaving the identity of the author in doubt, but when it was reprinted as *The Anti-Romance* it was attributed to an editor named Jean de La Lande, the equivalent of Cervantes' Cide Hamete Benengeli. Add its hundreds of pages of autocriticism and its *nouveau roman* title, and Sorel's antinovel feels even more postmodern than *Don Quixote*. More than anyone, Sorel reminds me of the late Gilbert Sorrentino, who not only wrote a mock pastoral himself (*Blue Pastoral*) but who devoted himself to exposing bad writing and literary pretension in his many novels, having as much vicious fun with the art versus life dichotomy as Sorel did. Genette notes "the dryness and meanness of his tone" (*Palimpsests*, 151), another trait Sorel shares with his sardonic 20th-century counterpart.

The Extravagant Shepherd was a popular success, and evidently did its job: no pastoral novels of note were written after it. (The impossibility of surpassing *Astrea* was probably a bigger factor.) Having plowed under the

pastoral, however, Sorel seems to have been at a loss what to do next. Around this time he compiled a fictional miscellany entitled *La Maison des jeux* (The House of Games), which was not published until 1642. Within this frame-tale narrative a group gathers to play a series of games with complicated rules; Verdier's account of it (75–83) makes it sound interesting, like something a member of OuLiPo might turn out.[18] In 1640 he published a bizarre philosophical fable entitled *La Solitude*, about a character on a mystic quest for truth that anticipates both Rousseau's natural philosophy and science fiction: Verdier claims the novel predicts "airplanes, electric light bulbs, and motion pictures!" (102). Like *La Maison des jeux* it was never translated into English, nor was *Polyandre*, a realistic novel about the Parisian bourgeoisie. Sorel published the first two parts in 1648, anonymously as usual, but abandoned both it and fiction altogether after that, devoting himself instead to compiling reference books for the remainder of his life. This is a shame, according to Verdier, who considers *Polyandre* "significant theoretically as the first systemic attempt at a novel of manners in France," though she adds, "Like so many experimental works, it is at times a rather laborious illustration of a theoretical position" (84). Nonetheless, Sorel is an unacknowledged pioneer of many trends in later fiction, and of all the French novelists of the 17th century he is the one most deserving of rehabilitation in the 21st.

Sorel's call for greater verisimilitude and more middle-class characters in fiction went unheard. The predominant genre of French fiction from around 1630 to 1660 was the "heroic novel": vast, multivolume works of romance and adventure featuring privileged mortals dashing from one daring exploit to the next.[19] In fact, Sorel may have been the first to use the term *roman héroïque* (near the end of *La Maison des jeux*), which Bannister defines as "a prose epic based on history and offering a reflection of *galant* society" (5). But he cautions that few of these novels "have anything to offer in the way of creative imagination and convincing characterization," and are useful mostly for "what they can tell us about the ideological and ethical climate of seventeenth-century France, for the novel reflects, possibly better than other genres, the ideological consciousness of the period" (2). Most

were churned out by authors responding to a market, not to their muse, and were ostensibly intended for aristocrats displaying "extraordinary virtue" (as a character in one of them defines "heroic"),[20] but mostly read by the idle rich, who called them "long-term novels" (*les romans de longue haleine*) because they took so long to read. ("Long-winded novels" is the preferred translation of impatient critics.) The best were translated into English for Francophiles, but they dated quickly; by the 1660s they were considered old hat, and looking back a century later, English novelist Clara Reeve dismissed them as relics of a bygone era: "These were the books that pleased our grandmothers, whose patience in wading through such tremendous volumes may raise our surprise: for to us they appear dull, heavy, and uninteresting" (*The Progress of Romance*, evening 5). "[T]o enjoy them now," Jacques Barzun wrote in 2000, "one must be a practiced skipper, for what has denied all these works permanent shelf life is the long stretches between oases" (340). But (to alter Barzun's geological metaphor) these gigantic novels form a mountain range in the middle of 17th-century French fiction that must be scaled before reaching the more interesting novels on the other side. We'll do some skipping, as Barzun advises.

Heroic novels were mongrels sired by (1) French translations of ancient Greek romances, especially Heliodorus's influential *Ethiopian Story* and Barclay's modernization of the genre in *Argenis*; (2) chivalric romances like the long-running *Amadis* cycle; and (3) pastorals like *Astrea*. They took their melodramatic plots from the first, the concept of a hero as a crusading superman from the second, and the idealization of love and the use of interpolated tales from the third. Before this new genre bulked up, a few shorter works showed the way. Jean Desmarets's *Ariana* (*L'Ariane*, 1632)—which at a mere 328 pages (in the anonymous English translation of 1636) is a weakling compared to the heroic novels that followed—is set amidst Nero's Christian persecutions in 1st-century Rome. Two boys from Syracuse visit Rome to see the big city and eventually fall in love with two Roman virgins: the heroic Mélinte with noble Ariane, and his Hylas-like wingman Palamède with her maid Epicharis. They try to avoid persecution from both Nero and Ariane's uncle, but Mélinte differs from the protagonists of Greek romances by his eager participation in some grisly battle scenes. As in *Astrea*, the titular character often finds herself naked

and/or in scandalous situations, the better (we presume) to contrast her Christian purity with pagan sensuality. Greek heroes were content to return home, marry their partners-in-adventure, and settle down, but Mélinte, forced to fight for his life near the end of the novel, scorns such complaisance, and in fact is grateful that the gods seem ready to end his life at the height of his heroic career: "If they refuse me an idle life, and ordain me to die now [that] there remains no more honor for me to acquire, ought I to complain to them for retiring me in the most illustrious period of my life?" (320). He beheads his foe and marries Ariane, but this gusto for glory and honor is what Desmarets grafted onto his more modest models, thereby creating the prototype for the heroic novel.

"Prepare yourself," boasts the protagonist of the first extended-length heroic novel, "for the most incredible and the least to be hoped for adventure you are able to imagine."[21] *Polexander* is a 1,300-page novel composed over a 20-year period by a wealthy nobleman named Marin Le Roy, sieur de Gomberville (1600?–74). Making the mistake of publishing his early drafts, he brought out *L'Exil de Polexandre et d'Ericlée* in 1619 when he was still a teenager, expanded it for a 1629 edition, completely rewrote it for a two-volume edition published in 1632 simply as *Polexandre*, spent another five years rethinking and rewriting it for a five-volume edition in 1637, then reprinted it the following year with corrections and further revisions for the definitive edition, over half a million words long. It was a huge success, partly because of its novelties: much of it takes place at sea or on islands in the Atlantic, making it the first sea adventure in the history of the novel (a distinction usually given to *The Pilot* by James Fenimore Cooper [1823]);[22] it is the first major novel to include scenes set in America and western Africa, creating a taste for exotica; and it is the first novel to take into account the unimaginable immensity of the world as a result of a century of exploration, displacing Europe as the center of the world (in the European mind) and fostering a multicultural attitude: heroes, virtuous maidens, and villains exist everywhere, from Peru to Timbuktu.

Polexander is the young king of the Canary Islands, which were considered the westernmost edge of the world at the time the novel is set (c. 1500). A noble-minded hero of the old school, Polexander is tormented by the memory of his encounter several years earlier with the child-queen of

the Inaccessible Isle, Alcidiane. Sixteen at the time, Polexander had seen and fallen in love with her portrait, and then had been blown by a storm to her mysterious island, where he performed services for the queen that entitled him to seek her hand in marriage, which she resisted, reluctant to give up her independence. Leaving the island to pursue the abductor of Alcidiane's confidante, Polexander could not find his way back to the uncharted island, and in the novel's present—he's now 21, Alcidiane 17—he roams the seas in search of his ideal. Like knights of old (at one point he is compared to Amadis), he is often diverted from his quest by calls for assistance to fight battles, to restore kingdoms to their rightful owners, to patch up relationships between noble-minded lovers, and to listen to the long, sad tales of heartbreak and betrayal of those he meets during the course of his adventures. (These secondary tales take up nearly 60 percent of the novel.) Eventually, he makes his way back to Alcidiane's island, quells a Spanish invasion, and marries the independent young woman.

The novel opens with a literal cliffhanger: from the vantage point of a young Turk aboard a ship, we watch as two men atop a cliff, struggling for possession of two boxes, fall into the sea. Gradually, we learn the details: after they are rescued, one proves to be a pirate, the other a mute; the two boxes contain the heart and a confessional manuscript from a man who committed suicide after seeing a portrait of Alcidiane and realizing he could never possess her. (There seems to be several portraits of the beautiful queen in circulation, and Polexander is only one of many who falls for her image.) We later find out the young Turk is actually Polexander's brother Iphidamante, and that all this is taking place on Ferro, the westernmost of the Canaries. This gradual revelation of details—a tactic that can be traced back to Heliodorus—is typical of *Polexander*: most characters are not named until several pages after they appear, or hundreds of pages if they are in disguise, like the androgynous Iphidamante, who masqueraded as a woman before disguising himself as a Turk. The novel is not narrated in linear fashion but is made up of a series of interpolated tales and digressions that jump around in time, gradually filling in the backstories and relationships of the large cast of characters. As a result, *Polexander* is a candidate, Thomas DiPiero proposes, for "what may be the most tortuous and labyrinthine narrative in all of French literature" (105). Unlike the characters in *Astrea*—which Gomberville admired and wrote a sequel to in

his mid-twenties—characters rarely tell their own stories; they are narrated by a companion or servant, and often break off to be taken up by someone else from a different, sometimes contradictory viewpoint later in the long novel. Since the bulk of the novel is made up of these twice-told tales rather than an omniscient narrator's account, the reader drifts along under a cloud of uncertainty, in the same boat as Polexander on his endless quest for an island whose location is uncertain, and like educated 17th-century Europeans who were unmoored from their old certainties after the existence of Americas was revealed, along with the sphericity of the globe and centrality of the sun.

One of the first interpolated tales concerns an Incan prince named Zalamtide, whom Polexander meets on a pirates' island in the Atlantic. His long tale, told by another because he is too morose to talk, takes us from Peru through Panama (and a tribe of Amazon women) to Mexico, where he falls in love and loses Montezuma's daughter, and consequently sinks into despair. This melancholy American and the suicide mentioned earlier set the tone for the entire novel: love is treated as a frustrating, disappointing ordeal, generated by superficial physical attraction (Alcidiane's pinup) and encouraging men to waste their lives on fruitless romantic quests. Although Polexander marries Alcidiane on the final page, the novel is littered with romantic suicides, ex-lovers crippled by rejection and/or jealousy, and abused spouses. Even Polexander has to humiliate himself as an African slave to win Alcidiane's hand, and by giving her hand the young feminist is giving up her much-loved liberty. Novelists always set up obstacles for lovers to overcome to make their eventual union all the more satisfying, but Gomberville portrays love as a long, tedious ocean voyage to someplace miserable. Upon first landing upon the Inaccessible Isle, the 16-year-old Polexander is worried rather than excited at meeting his dreamgirl: "Know, my friend, that I am absolutely unworthy of Alcidiane's chains, that the least of her slaves hath those qualities to which I can never pretend, and that fortune hath thrown me on these inaccessible coasts for no other end but to engage me in a despair which surpasseth the despair of all that have been unfortunate from the beginning of the world" (2.3). Another character asks "if love be not a dangerous thing, or rather a malediction which heaven in its anger pours down to chastise the sins of the earth. Certainly 'tis the greatest scourge it can inflict upon us" (2.4). But pursuing an ideal love is

part of the job description for the protagonist of a French heroic novel, so Polexander never loses sight of this objective during his adventures on land and sea.

Gomberville chose the ocean for his mise-en-scène not only for its fresh plot possibilities—"a theater of prodigies and novelties," he calls it (2.5)—but also for its metaphoric possibilities. Polexander "imput[es] the ordinary agitations of the winds and the sea to the cruelties of Fortune" (1.5), regards tempests and shipwrecks as symbols of his frustrated quest for Alcidiane's love, and considers his bootless wanderings o'er the watery main as an apt metaphor for life. Occasionally our hero expresses confidence in a benevolent (Christian) Providence, but an unpredictable, uncontrollable (pagan) Fortune rules the world of *Polexander*, often personified by the senseless sea. Gomberville even uses typography to evoke the ocean: Edward Baron Turk, who has written the best book in English on *Polexander*, notes that it lacks normal paragraphing: "the words of the text [are] spread out to form an even surface" like the ocean itself (86), a clever union of form and content, and a ploy that shanghais readers into serving as crew on "that fatal ship [Polexander's] after which we have been so long wandering" (4.5). Even Gomberville's style resembles the gray wastes of the ocean. Turk describes it as "undeniably dull . . . monochromatic" (86), unrelieved by any "islets of verse" (84), a feature of most romantic adventures of the time. Gomberville had included some poetry in the 1619 version and was a published poet, but there are no poems to interrupt the monontonous surface of his ocean of prose, not even a sea shanty.

The one stylistic exception occurs at the end of part 1 when a slave of Alcidiane's arrives at the pirates' hideout by chance (one of way too many incredible coincidences in this novel). He shares with Polexander some pages from his queen's diary, in which she struggles with her contradictory feelings for Polexander. Gomberville casts overboard his usual long, flowing sentences to replicate the hurried jottings of a lovesick teenage girl: "What could cause the strange alteration I find in myself? Can I be sick or mad without knowing it? Within this little while I am ill wheresoever I am. If I walk I am presently weary. The places I delight in, I cannot now endure" (1.5). Transcribing a nightmare, she uses violent imagery to describe the man who loves her (recalling the dream of Astrea, another virgin scared of sex): "Cruel and pleasing enemy; dragon that hast the face

of an infant; fair monster, content thee with my tears and with the blood that thy paws have drawn out of my breast. Give not over to rend it wider: What, are thou not yet glutted? Thou pullest out my heart, and thy nails instead of tearing it, covers it over with wounds that burn it." On one page, "*h*alf blotted out" and resembling a passage from *Tristam Shandy*, the poor girl is reduced to sputtering in fragments, beginning with the last syllable of her tormentor's name:

> — — — —er. Why doth that name thrust itself more often, more pleasingly into my remembrance than so many others that are more dear to me? — — — — Yet 'twere nothing if — — — — But I recall it, when he goes hence and — — — —

> her face, naturally sweet, might receive new graces by that art. Polexander setting himself right against her, marked all her sweetness and allurements, and sat surprised rather than charmed with that address wherewithal she governed her quick and languishing eyes; she presently began to speak . . . (2.1)

Sometime later, on board a ship, they switch positions and Polexander tells *her* a story, again in a sexually charged setting: "After he made this reply, he came near to a little bed on which the princess was seated, and seating himself right against her, in this manner began the to-be-lamented adventures of Benzaida" (2.2). Parts of Alcidiane's diary could be deemed autoerotic, and the concluding sentences of the novel make the equation between reading and fornicating explicit: "Those who had permission to follow our semi-gods into their sanctuary came forth as soon as the people were gone. Let us imitate them that knew so much civility, and not boldly knock at so sacred gates, but be contented to know that Polexander and Alcidiane are together; and since we have so long time enjoyed them, have so much justice as to think it fitting they should likewise enjoy one another." But "enjoy" is hardly the word; there's such a thing as too much foreplay, and this romantic sea cruise goes on far too long. Despite its novelties and occasional islands of interest, *Polexander* is a tedious read, and I can't imagine it would appeal to a 21st-century audience. Sorel's novels deserve to be revived, but *Polexander* can be left in its watery grave.[23]

Taking note of Lord Gomberville's success was another French nobleman, Gautier de Costes, sieur de La Calprenède (1610?–63), who is thought to have assisted him with the 1637 edition of *Polexander*. La Calprenède spent most of the 1630s and '40s writing tragic dramas; he took up novel-writing for personal reasons, suggests a gossip-columnist of the time named Gédéon Tallemant des Réaux: He wrote his first novel *Cassandra* (*Cassandre*, 1642–45) because "of his rejected love for Mlle Hamon, who was being kept by the father of the maréchal d'Hocquincourt. Tallemant says that he offered her his sword a hundred times for her to kill him and 'played a lover from a novel so much that he finally wrote one, where most of the heroines are widows, because his mistress was one.' "[24]

Cassandra is enormous, published in 10 volumes over a three-year period until it reached some 5,500 pages (= 3,000 today, the length of *Astrea*). It deals not with the unheeded prophetess of the Trojan War but with the romantic and ethical conflicts of a dozen or so royals living through Alexander the Great's conquest of Persia and his subsequent death in Babylon in 323 bce. Our Cassandra, aka Princess Statira, is the proud daughter of Darius III, king of Persia, and is forced to marry Alexander though her heart belongs to an ambitious prince of Scythia (southern Ukraine) named Oroondates.[25] The novel might have been named after him because he is the main character, whereas Cassandra makes only sporadic appearances; on the other hand, she motivates all his heroic actions and exemplifies the moral qualities La Calprenède sought to celebrate in this highly ethical novel.

Oroondates fell in love at first sight of Cassandra when she was 15 and the prisoner (along with the rest of Darius's family) of Alexander's invading army, as we learn in the first of the novel's many inset stories. Like *Polexander*, the bulk of the novel is made up of these *histoires*, sometimes narrated by their protagonists, sometimes by others, each one filling in a piece of the narrative puzzle. What emerges is a convoluted story of romantic entanglements and political machinations between the Greeks, Persians, and Scythians in Mesopotamia in the 320s, with a focus on the conflicts that arise between duty and love. Oroondates's love for the Persian princess, for example, leads him to join her father's army against his own people, which naturally enrages his own father, the king of Scythia. After Cassandra is pressured into marrying Alexander, she assumes the role of dutiful wife and, after his death (poisoned by servants), allows that sense of duty to override her lingering love for Oroondates. Their conflicted relationship is mirrored by a nearly identical one between Lysimachus (one of Alexander's generals) and Cassandra's sister Parisatis, which is complemented in turn by the relationships of a half dozen other couples—including the queen of the Amazons and her crossdressing admirer—who likewise have to choose between public duty (to a nation, a former love, or to their aristocratic station) and private desire.

In essence, *Cassandra* is a series of case studies in *générosité*, a recurring word in both the French and English versions of the novel.[26] It

encapsulates honor, loyalty, reputation, self-esteem, and fair play—the latter quality most often demonstrated when a character has an opportunity to vanquish a rival but refuses to do so because his or her opponent is at a disadvantage. Those who possess this generosity recognize and value each other across national and political lines, forming an elite, egotistical class. (As Bannister notes, "*Générosité* is a self-centered virtue, its main function being to confirm the hero's assessment of himself" [145].) This was the quality most valued by French nobility in the mid 17th century, who were "experiencing a resurgence of aristocratic individualism after the death of Richelieu" in 1642 (Bannister, 152), and all the melodramatic activities of the novel can be read as larger-than-life representations of the romantic and political affairs of La Calprenède's high-society readers. Alexander the Great's conquest is just window dressing for Parisian salon life, and as Tallemant suggested, Oroondates+Cassandra=La Calprenède+Mlle Hamon in Persian clothes.

"A long contest between love and duty" (1.6), the long novel often pushes this obsession with *générosité* to ridiculous extremes, as when Oroondates's sister Berenice threatens to kill herself rather than marry Arsacomes, the man her father is trying to force upon her; when her true love Arsaces (aka Artaxerxes, Cassandra's brother) stormed her palace and rescued her, she resented this affront to her self-esteem, as an incredulous Arsaces later tells his listeners:

> "Ah Arsaces" (said she with a sigh), "what have you done?" "I have done what you had reason to expect from my affection" (answered I); "I have pulled you out of the arms of that unworthy husband that was intended to you." "You have so" (said she), "but you have also pulled me out of my father's arms. . . . Arsaces" (said she), "since you have satisfied your love, satisfy my honor also. I am not offended at your action, but if you have loved me, I beseech you in the name of all the gods to restore my liberty." "How, madam" (said I, in much astonishment), "do you then demand your liberty of me, and are you not free, are you not sovereign amongst us, when as before you were a captive, and a prisoner in that place from whence I have delivered you?" "'Tis true" (added my princess), "I was so, but that captivity and those misfortunes I suffered were better becoming me, and more advantageous than this liberty." . . .

> "And which way do you keep that promise [to marry me]" (said I, quite transported), "if you command me to restore you to Arsacomes?" "You shall not restore me to Arsacomes" (replied she) "but only to the king my father, whom my honor suffers me not to forsake without his consent, and if the king gives me to Arsacomes, I by my death can oppose his tyranny, without offending my reputation." (4.5)

Exasperated by her masochistic moral calculus, Arsaces returns the princess to her tyrannical father, for which she thanks him. He resolves to somehow die in her presence to satisfy *his* self-esteem, though neither of them actually dies. No one, least of all the author, questions these suicidal values, though a century later Charlotte Lennox would have great fun mocking these values, and the genre in general, in *The Female Quixote*.

La Calprenède displays admirable narrative control as he slowly fills in his enormous jigsaw puzzle, adding each new piece at an appropriate, if often contrived time. (Too often a character goes for a walk and just happens to bump into a long-lost friend or enemy, who then recounts his adventures.) Both the temporal and spatial scope (about a dozen years, mostly in Mesopotamia) are narrower than those in *Polexander* and thus easier to keep track of, and the gradual unveiling of Cassandra/Statira's story is well-paced. At the very beginning, Oroondates is told that Statira has been killed, which causes him to attempt suicide—the first of many: virtually every character attempts or contemplates suicide at some point in response to disappointment or dishonor—and then a page later, we catch a snatch of conversation in which "a woman of tall stature almost in a country habit" is addressed as Cassandra, with no further explanation of who she is for hundreds of pages. (We learn later that Cassandra is her given name, and Statira her official, royal name.) Dramatizing the deceptiveness of appearances, characters who are introduced as foes turn out to be friends, and vice versa, and apparent acts of "inconstancy" are inevitably the result of misunderstandings or evil rumors spread by those who lack generosity, like Alexander's widow Roxana, the villainess of the novel who loves Oroondates. What else . . . the battle scenes are pretty good.

On the other hand, La Calprenède too often forgets who is narrating the inset stories and has his characters recreate scenes at which they were not present, recite letters from memory, and tell stories within stories from the

wrong point of view. This method often robs the stories of any drama; when Lysimachus tells of the time he was thrown into an arena to face a lion, the fact he obviously survived to tell the tale weakens the dramatic tension. The author relies on wild coincidences way too often, and lazily gathers all his characters together in one place to facilitate their encounters. In the present of the novel, set a short time after Alexander's death, nearly everything happens at a country estate near Babylon belonging to a man named Polemon, who runs a kind of heartbreak hotel where all the major characters eventually wind up to lick their romantic wounds and tell their sad stories before the big battle at the end, in which Oroondates and Lysimachus storm Roxana's Babylonian palace, free their princesses, kill the bad guys, and then celebrate a group wedding with all the other principals. The whole thing is a throwback to the chivalric novels of the previous century, too reliant on clichés, and too goody-goody to appeal to readers today. Even some readers in La Calprenède's day scoffed at *Cassandra*; the above-mentioned Tallemant admitted that "the content is fine and rich, because it's the story of Alexander: there is even a well-ordered plot; but the heroes are as alike as two drops of water, all talk pretentious nonsense, and are a hundred leagues above ordinary men" (Levi, 396).

But enough readers lapped it up to encourage La Calprenède to write a second novel. In 1647, he published the first installment of *Cléopâtre*, concluding it 10 years later in 12 volumes. (Reportedly he wanted to stretch it out to 30 volumes.) At about 4,100 pages—around 2,500 in modern terms—*Cleopatra* is a little shorter than *Cassandra*, but they are as alike as two sisters. The titular heroine is not the famous serpent of old Nile, though she appears early on, but her daughter by Marc Antony, Cleopatra VIII (40 bce–6 ce). Again, the novel's principal characters converge on a safe house—Tyradates' palace in Alexandria, Egypt, or at the Roman governor's house there—where they or (more often) their servants tell their tales, the same sort as those told in *Cassandra*: the romantic problems of royalty.

There are three main narrative arcs: one involves Coriolanus, the future Juba II of Mauritania (northern Algeria/Morocco), who is a 15-year-old in Rome when he witnesses the 10-year-old Cleopatra paraded through the streets after the deaths of Antony and her mother, falls in love with her, endures the usual romantic rivalries and misunderstandings while she

endures kidnapping by pirates and other maidenly perils until Caesar Augustus allows them to marry. (As in *Cassandra*, a mass wedding of all the principals concludes the final volume.) A second narrative arc features Cesarion, the son of Julius Caesar and Cleopatra, who at age 15 is sent to the court of the king of Ethiopia; he falls in love with the king's 10-year-old daughter Candace, who is later kidnapped by pirates etc. etc. until they too are granted marriage by Augustus. And then there's the Roman Artaban, who likewise goes to the Ethiopian court; he wants Candy too, is banished for doing so, goes to Armenia and falls for the king's sister, strikes out again, then falls for the king of Parthia's daughter, and after the usual complications marries her and inherits her father's throne. There are about a dozen subplots (one involving the poet Ovid [7.3]) that dramatize minor variations on the problems of love, jealousy, divided loyalties, and other staples of romantic adventure novels.[27] The novel is as chaste as *Cassandra*—no sex before marriage (the author preserves Cleopatra VII's respectability by insisting she secretly married both Caesar and then Antony)—and women are consistently portrayed as more moral and civilized than men.

Unlike *Cassandra*, this novel favors gallantry and romantic sentiments over battle scenes and violence, no doubt due to the changing tastes of readers after the success of Madeleine de Scudéry's softer heroic novels (next in line for review). As Bannister notes, *Cleopatra* "reflects the less warlike atmosphere of the period following the end of the Fronde,[28] when the virtues of the warrior were coming to be less highly regarded and when strongly feminist views were being heard in the salons" (166). But this is not necessarily an improvement. Perhaps it's the fault of the English translation—an unabridged one produced by a team of translators beginning in 1652 (while the original was still in progress) under the odd title *Hymen's Præludia*—but the narrative is flat and uninspired, as though the author felt the story material (derived from ancient historians) was lively enough that it needed no embellishment. (Levi remarks, "La Calprenède is not a careful writer, and his prose style is almost insultingly negligent" [397].) Like *Cassandra*, the complex story unfolds out of chronological order, a calculatedly confusing method the author seems to acknowledge proudly when he notes a warrior's "confusedly filleted" armor "as if art had studied

disorder" (1.4), and again at the end when he describes the pre-wedding gathering of all his characters as "the most delightful disorder, and the most pleasant confusion in the world" (12.4). Like television soap operas, which are what La Calprenède's novels formally resemble, the multiple story arcs are not too difficult to follow, but they are too reliant on clichés and stereotypes to hold much appeal today.

La Calprenède began one more heroic novel—*Faramond*, based on the legendary king of the Franks—but died before he could finish it. (He wrote seven volumes; another novelist named Vaumorière completed it in 1670 with five more, amassing 8,700 pages in the original edition.) It is considered the weakest of his novels, so we'll skip over it.[29] By 1661, when the first volumes of *Faramond* were published, this kind of fiction was falling out of fashion in France; however, it was picked up in England, not by novelists but by dramatists like John Dryden and Nathaniel Lee, who for the next half century plundered La Calprenède's novels for material, just as Elizabethan dramatists did a century earlier with Italian novellas.

La Calprenède's principal rival, and the only one still read today, is the queen of historical romances, Madeleine de Scudéry (1607–1701), the best-selling novelist of the 17th century and the first Frenchwoman to support herself by her pen. Her novels were published under the name of her "swaggering and abrasive" older brother Georges (1601–67),[30] but his input was limited to discussing the plots with her, furnishing some details for the battle scenes (he had been a soldier), and helping with proofreading, though he seems to have taken a larger hand in her second novel. At the time, it was considered unladylike to publish a novel—only a few attributed to women appeared during the first half the the 17th-century—so Mademoiselle was content to let her brother take credit on the title page, for as Tallement tattles, *tout le monde* knew the novels were written by her. (Georges did eventually write a novel, *Almahide* [1660–63], heavily influenced by Pérez de Hita's *Civil Wars of Granada*, but it was cowritten by his young wife and appeared as the fad for heroic novels was passing.)

Her first novel, *Ibrahim, or the Illustrious Bassa* (*Ibrahim ou l'illustre bassa*, i.e., pasha) was published in 1641 in four volumes (amounting to about 900 pages in modern terms), and is both a contribution to and critique of the heroic romance. Gomberville and La Calprenède were only two of

many novelists cranking these things out in the 1630s, so she (and maybe Georges) begins with a lecturing preface that tries to establish some rules for the genre and to repurpose it from artless entertainment to entertaining art. Aside from Sorel's early remarks embedded in his novels, this preface represents the first attempt at a theory of French fiction, and is all the more audacious coming from a virgin writer rather than an experienced professional. Evoking ancient Greek novelists like Heliodorus and recent ones like "the great and incomparable Urfé," Scudéry first requires of novels that "all the parts of them should make but one body, and that nothing be seen in them which is loose and unprofitable."[31] They should be based on reliable historical sources and be fairly realistic—that is, they shouldn't include monsters or superhuman feats by their heroes, or rely too often on melodramatic devices like shipwrecks. (In a dig at *Polexander*, she notes that some unnamed novelists are way too attracted to the dramatic possibilities of the sea and "have named it the theatre of inconstancy.") Like Sorel, she advices novelists to use realistic names for their characters, and, unlike Sorel, not write anything "which the ladies may not read without blushing." Elaborate descriptions are OK, especially of buildings, as long as one doesn't overdo it like "Poliphile in his dreams, who hath set down most strange terms"—a surprising reference to Colonna's *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili*, and an indication of Scudéry's wide reading. It's also fine to borrow subplots from others, as she freely admits she has done, which has been corroborated by scholars such as Clarence Rouillard, who has tracked down most of her sources in his erudite book *The Turk in French History, Thought and Literature*. She advices using these subplots to add diversity to the plot, and concludes by insisting "that a narrative style ought not to be too much inflated, no more than that of ordinary conversations; that the more facile it is, the more excellent it is; that it ought to glide along like rivers, and not rebound up like torrents." In a word, ladylike.

As might be expected from these confident remarks, *Ibrahim* is a smooth, professional performance. Opening in medias res (as the Greeks suggested) with an elaborate description of a triumphal Turkish parade, rich in Oriental splendor and excess, we learn the grand vizier Ibrahim is facing an unwanted marriage. The sultan has just offered him his daughter's hand, forcing Ibrahim to make a confession: he is not really a Muslim slave who

has risen to to the heights of political office; his real name is Justinian, he is a noble Christian from Genoa, and he is already engaged to Princess Isabella of Monaco. Based loosely on the life of Ibrahim Pasha (1493?–1536), grand vizier to Suleiman the Magnificent (ruled 1520–66), the novel goes on to recount how he obtained reluctant permission from the sultan to visit Isabella in Monaco on the condition he return in six months; torn between his love for Isabella and his duty to Suleiman—and fearing the sensuous sultan will seduce Isabella if (as she suggests) he marries her and takes her back to Constantinople—morose Ibrahim spends most of the novel fretting over his divided loyalties. Both he and Isabella are virtuous, noble beings who wouldn't dream of doing anything that would damage their reputations, and they fear that the grave (for him) and the cloister (for her) may be the only solutions. After six months, Ibrahim sneaks back to Turkey, where he is so depressed that the sultan—who deeply values his grand vizier's friendship—arranges to have Isabella and her friends abducted and brought to Constantinople to cheer Ibrahim up. He decides the best way to gain his freedom is to win the war against Persia, and while he is away doing that, Suleiman predictably falls for the beautiful Isabella, and twists on the horns of his own dilemma: whether to remain loyal to Ibrahim, or be loyal to his own desires. As his passion overmasters his reason—and Scudéry makes it abundantly clear that passion and reason are irreconcilable enemies—the potent potentate is tempted to kill Ibrahim, held back only by the vow he had made to him near the beginning of the novel "that as long as Suleiman shall be living, thou shalt not die a violent death" (1.2). Told by his crafty advisor that sleeping is a kind of death, Suleiman is tempted to have Ibrahim strangled while he is sleeping, but on the night of the execution the sultan's conscience won't allow him to fall asleep. Experiencing a change of heart and allowing reason to return to her throne, he allows both Ibrahim and Isabella to return home, where they take part in a group wedding common to the genre. (Historically, Suleiman executed Ibrahim and confiscated his palace—which still stands in Istanbul—but the romance genre demands a happy ending, so Scudéry says the Turks put out the false story of Ibrahim's death, which was swallowed by historians thereafter, including the very ones—like Paolo Giovio, Laonicus Chalcondyles, and Michel Baudier—she cribbed from.)

In addition to flipping the script of recorded history to meet her artistic needs, Scudéry has fun with other genre expectations via a madcap character called the French marquis, one of Isabella's acquaintances. Mocking the ability of characters in other novels to give letter-perfect recitations of letters during their narrations, he mentions one he once received: "If I had as happy a memory as a romance hero's, I would recite it unto you without changing a syllable, but since I have it not, it shall suffice that I do tell you in general . . ." (2.2). In other novels, when a character prepares to narrate an interpolated story, we usually get a prelude like this: "sitting down on the bedside after he had thought a while what he had to say, [Lysimachus] began his relation on this manner" (*Cassandra*, 2.1). Asked to resume his story, the French marquis

> acquitted himself of it after an extraordinary way; yet was it not without musing attentively on that which he had to say, never regarding whether all the company were in case[32] to hear him or no, and after he had performed all the ceremonies of a man that prepares himself for a long narration, he began to speak in this sort.

The Third History of the Marquis

> "I loved a woman passionately that was of a condition equal to mine, she answered my affection, whether feignedly or truly I know not, but I know that I received all the honest favors from her which I could expect, and that at such time as I was the most favorably entreated by her, without having any occasion to complain on my part, nor seeking any pretext on hers, she forsook me for another. Behold the end of my *History*." The whole company then broke out into such a laughter to see that his attention, his silence, and the preparation which he had brought to the hearing of a long adventure had been paid with so short a narrative as they thought they should never have given over. "It must be acknowledged," said Leonida at length, "that if they which write our romances did make them deliver their relations in this sort, we should not admire as we do the wonderful memories of their heroes, who make narrations which cause them to pass whole days without eating and nights without sleeping." (2.4)

In her quest for verisimilitude, Scudéry breaks up her interpolated stories into realistic lengths, and allows her characters to eat and sleep as needed. She'll often insert an explanation for how a character came by certain information rather than allow the flagrant violations of point of view found in other novels of this genre (though she still slips occasionally), and she tries to avoid clichés; one character skims over his early courtship thus: "I will not repeat unto you the first speeches of love which I had with Hippolita, seeing they are for the most part all alike amongst worthy persons" (2.4). Further subverting genre expectations, Scudéry withholds a physical description of her hero Ibrahim until the final chapter of the long novel, by which point the reader wonders if he is reading a parody of the historic romance rather than a refinement.

Though the novel ends with the requisite marriages of nearly all the principals, Scudéry mocks this practice by the refusal of one couple to participate: the French marquis and his girlfriend Emilia. Clearly inspired by d'Urfé's swinger Hylas, the marquis of Touraine opposes marriage for the same reason Scudéry herself did (as articulated in her next novel): to speak of marriage is to speak "of that destroyer of love, of that tyrant of liberty, of that enemy of pleasure, which most commonly disjoins all that love hath united, which discovers all the defects of the mind and humor to persons that believed they were altogether perfect, and that which was worse than all the rest for him, to introduce into the stead of it jealousy of honor, a false constancy, and domestic cares." Touraine goes on to quip, "the greatest proof of affection that I can render unto a maid when I become enamored of her is not to marry her; yea, and I have met with some, unto whom the more favorably to receive my affection, and to testify unto them the respect which I bear them, I have declared at first sight that in becoming their servant, I had no design to become their master, and in assuring them that I was their slave, I assured them I would never be their tyrant" (2.1). The other characters laugh at "the merry humor of the marquis," but it is obvious from Scudéry's life (she never married) and later works that Touraine is her spokesman, and in a novel filled with literal tyrants and slaves (and no happily married couples), we need to regard Touraine as more than comic relief (though his stories are truly hilarious). His *toujours gai* attitude makes a mockery of the overly serious Ibrahim and Isabella and subverts the very premise of the heroic novel, namely, the dramatization of

noble ideals. (It must be noted, however, that Touraine merely flirts with women; he's not sexually active like Hylas. This is a very chaste novel.) Scudéry marries her two ideal characters as expected, but she gives the final word to Touraine, who on the last page of the novel delivers "a satire against marriage" and renews his vow of "inviolable friendship" with worldly Emilia, who shares his antimarriage views: "I could never without aversion behold a man who of my slave would become my master, or at leastwise my equal" (4.5). The wedding party "then burst out laughing, and believing that their discourse was nothing but sport," but Scudéry was dead serious.

And though the gravitational pull of her giant novels is hard to resist, I can't leave the smaller world of *Ibrahim* without admiring a few more of its features. We are treated to a quick history of the Ottoman Empire by way of a portrait gallery of all its sultans, with Ibrahim as docent. Scudéry occasionally widens the single perspective of most novels to record multiple, sometimes conflicting viewpoints; at the beginning of the fourth book of part 1, for example, the narrator notes the different reactions of the passengers on a ship as they approach Genoa, and on the next page we get the various reactions of Genoans to the approaching ship, ranging from joy to fear. This recognition of subjectivity feels very modern, as does a later scene when the narrator records gossip about Ibrahim and Isabella: "To conclude, they said all things except the truth, which was not known to any but the princess and Justiniano" (end of 2.4). Questioning the pursuit of "greatness" (which devoured her brother Georges), Scudéry gives us the story of a scheming beauty named Roxelane, who eventually becomes Suleiman's sultana; the narrator heaps as much scorn on the word "greatness" as Fielding would a century later in *Jonathan Wild* (1743). And though some critics have ridiculed the quibble over living/sleeping that Suleiman is tempted to exploit to sidestep his vow—similar to the pound of flesh loophole at the end of *The Merchant of Venice*—Scudéry carefully links these terms to the opposition between reason and passion, the latter representing the sleep of reason, and concludes that the use of reason is the defining quality of a true hero – a very humanistic view for the 17th century, when faith and reason were butting heads. (The latter conflict doesn't get much play in the novel; both Ibrahim and Isabella are devout Catholics, and during their troubles he feels he's being punished by his god

for passing as a Muslim, while she feels she's being tested, though the narrator provides enough mundane explanations to dispel these superstitious notions.) And for all its fidelity to Turkish history and local color, *Ibrahim* can just as easily be read as a fictionalized account of contemporary Parisian life as a historical novel, for as Bannister points out, "What is under consideration here is effectively a refined version of the *honnêteté* [sincerity/honor/refinement] which was establishing itself as the social ideal in Parisian society, an extension of the social norms which the reader might be expected to obey" (139). This last concern is what made Scudéry's next novel such a success.

Tipping the scales at around 3,200 pages, *Artamenes, or Cyrus the Great* (*Artamène, ou le grand Cyrus*, 1649–53) is the Mount Everest of *les romans héroïque*, the longest novel in French literature (after the medieval *Perceforest*). Like *Ibrahim*, it begins with a bang: "The conflagration of Sinope [a city on the Black Sea] was so great that the very sky, the sea, the valleys and tops of mountains, though far remote, were all illuminated by its flames, so that, notwithstanding the black mask of night, all things might mournfully be discerned: . . ."[33] But rather than improving on *Ibrahim*, as one might expect, the first half of *Cyrus* is a surprising step backward, committing the same faults Scudéry criticized in the preface to her first novel, and that her characters mocked. Anthony Levi is correct when he says "the novel starts in almost crude, quasi-plagiaristic rivalry with La Calprenède"—specifically *Cassandra*—and "with a probable change at least of principal author from the fifth volume" (830, 829), implying Georges began the novel and Madeleine finished it. The opening chapters contain many stagey soliloquies of the sort Georges excelled at—he was a successful dramatist—and some of the battle scenes are based on unpublished documents he had access to, so this may be a case where his name on the title page is justified.

"Yes—oh, dear, yes—the novel tells a story," as E. M. Forster laments (45). Here the story is about how the famous Persian emperor Cyrus the Great (ruled 550–530 bce) conquered the Near East. To hear Scudéry tell it, Cyrus's conquests were merely a by-product of his attempts to rescue the girl he loved, Mandane of Cappadocia (a fictitious character). Traveling like La Calprenède's Oroondates under an assumed name to see something of

the world, “Artamenes” falls in love at first sight with this princess, “planet-struck” by her beauty and reputation for “severe virtue,” then spends the entire novel pursuing her as she is abducted by one rival after another. Each time he conquers the kingdom of an abductor, she is spirited away by yet another rival. (None of them lays a finger on her, though; like *Ibrahim*, this is a frigidly chaste novel.) Scudéry compacts two decades of the historical Cyrus’s military campaigns into an event-filled year when he was 24, ending with the rescue of Mandane from the evil queen of the Massagetai (a tribe that occupied present-day Kazakhstan) and the obligatory marriage of the long-separated lovers, along with that of several members of their entourages. In historical fact, Cyrus died in that battle against the Massagetai, but as Scudéry did in *Ibrahim*, she rewrites history, claiming that “the noise of his death was so universally divulged in all remote places, and so generally believed, that many excellent histories were deceived by the mistake, and historians have left this supposed death of Cyrus in their histories” (10.3), such as Herodotus, one of Scudéry’s principal sources. Instead, she followed Xenophon’s *Education of Cyrus* by granting him a long, happy life, in this case as a reward for his gallant devotion to his beloved.

Xenophon took liberties with recorded history to portray Cyrus as the ideal king; for Scudéry, he is the ideal lover. In her rose-colored view, a lover is obligated to be miserable when separated from the beloved; as a woman tells her potential lover in one of the novel’s 27 interpolated tales, “I declare to you that I will never be satisfied with you if you do not become the most unhappy of men from the moment I am out of your sight” (10.2/113–14).[34] Sad Cyrus displays this attitude throughout the novel, and for that reason—not for his military prowess—he is rewarded: on the interminable novel’s final page, the exhausted reader blearily reads, “Thus the great prince in the world, after he had been the most miserable of all lovers, became now the happiest man upon earth” (10.3). One of the few premarital tiffs he has with Mandane occurs after he spied her smiling at something while he was in hiding—she is supposed to be as miserable as he is!—and the only entertainment Cyrus takes is listening to tales of romantic misery. *Cyrus*’s great length is due to its dozens of variations on this theme of suffering for love: “so many persecutions, so many wars, so many

shipwrecks, and so many misfortunes" (2.2), all narrated at an escargot's pace. Published in installments over a four-year period, *Cyrus*—like all heroic romances—resembles a long-running soap opera, a *feuilleton télévisé* as they call them in France.

While Scudéry thoroughly researched the historical background to *Ibrahim*, she took a more casual approach for *Cyrus*, picking and choosing among details in Herodotus, Xenophon, and Diodorus Siculus, rearranging and modernizing them as she wished, and inventing whatever else she needed; rather than apologizing for these liberties, she winks at her educated readers in the preface to assure them that they "can put their minds to rest by imagining that the sources for the work have been taken from an old Greek manuscript by Hegesippus which is in the Vatican, and which is so precious and rare that it has never been printed, nor will it ever be" (Aronson, 69; the preface was omitted from the English translation). For Scudéry was less interested in recreating 6th-century Persia than in celebrating her own circle of acquaintances and their notions of gallantry. *Cyrus* is a roman à clef containing idealized versions of the aristocrats she mingled with at the Hôtel de Rambouillet and other Parisian salons, who spent their time dissecting the nature of love and defining gallantry. Both the principal narrative arc about Cyrus and Mandane and the novella-length *histoires* concern modern love, not ancient history. (Make that upper-class love, for commoners are dismissed throughout *Cyrus* as little better than animals.) Scudéry also took liberties in order to align Cyrus's warring era with her own; as publisher Humphrey Moseley notes at the beginning of the English translation of *Cyrus*, "our author in this hath so laid his scenes as to touch upon the greatest affairs of our times, for designs of war and peace are better hinted and cut open by a romance than by downright histories, which, being barefaced, are forced to be often too modest and sparing, [whereas] these disguised discourses, freely [im]personating every man and no man, have liberty to speak out."

Though Cyrus and Mandane are predictably married at the end, as are most of their royal friends, Scudéry pushes back against genre expectations with several arguments against marriage, advocating platonic relations instead. (It bears repeating that *La Pucelle du Marais*, as she was called—the Virgin (or Old Maid) of the Marais, her Parisian neighborhood—never married.) While in prison in volume 2, Cyrus listens to "The History of

Philoxypes and Policrite," set in Cyprus, where the worship of Venus Urania (who represents friendship, brotherly love) has recently supplanted Venus Anadyomene (representing sex and libertinism), where Christian *agapē* is preferred over pagan *eros*. As in *Ibrahim*, sexual passion is considered an offense against reason and "dangerous," an inclination to be avoided in favor of chaste friendship, or endless courtship.

The fullest expression of these views comes near the end in "The History of Sapho," ostensibly the tale of the Greek poet Sappho's relationship with Phaon but actually a self-portrait of Madeleine and her relationship to a younger man named Paul Pellisson, secretary to young King Louis XIV. According to legend, Sappho threw herself off a cliff in unrequited love for Phaon, a ferryman, but Scudéry will have none of this: in her version, it's Phaon who pesters Sapho for marriage. Clearly an early feminist, Scudéry/Sapho advocates the education of women, arguing they should spend more time reading and less on "ribbons, shoe buckles, and the trifles of ladies' toilettes" [10.2/22]); dismisses pretty airheads, and the men who marry them for their looks (Scudéry herself was a plain woman, even ugly according to some); defines the qualities of good conversation; and equates marriage with slavery, husbands with tyrants. This novella ends as Sapho and Phaon journey to a feminist utopia called New Sarmatae, a gated community ruled over by a young queen where there is equality between the sexes, support for the arts and sciences, and respect for gallantry and constancy. (Indeed, "there are punishments for unfaithful lovers as well as for rebel subjects" [121].) Through Sapho, Scudéry makes her case "that to love always, with an equal ardor, one must never marry" (136)—the same argument the French marquis made back in *Ibrahim*, and much more winningly, it must be said. He wanted women to be permanently desirable, not taken for granted after a few years of marriage; Sapho wants her men to be just friends—that death sentence no guy wants to hear—and seems to fear sex, intimacy, and loss of control. She also displays considerable naïveté, wondering how any man could be attracted to a fun, beautiful woman with bad handwriting and poor spelling! Nonetheless, as Bannister notes, Sapho and many of Scudéry's female characters "are the incarnation of a heroic ideal offered to the polite society of the Fronde period as an alternative to the militaristic heroes of earlier novels" and reflect "the increasing influence of feminism" (178–79).

Cyrus the Great is a transitional work, for Scudéry personally as well as for the French novel, progressing slowly, as Levi points out, "from the adventure story to the novel of psychological analysis" (829). But it commits too many of the faults of the older adventure stories, whose clichés Scudéry had criticized in the preface to *Ibrahim*, and its psychological analysis is limited to a few heroines of the intercalated stories. (Cyrus and Mandane are too idealized to evince much psychological depth.) For all its talk of feminist equality, *Cyrus*'s women adhere to patriarchal notions of virtue and social norms; equality here seems limited to educating women well enough to take part in *male* conversations. And Scudéry's love for theatrical gallantry and exquisite manners contributed to *préciosité*, a fad satirized by Molière in his comedy *Les Précieuses ridicules* (1659), one of whose precious fools, Madelon, may be named after Madeleine, and which contains mocking references to "*Cirrus the Great*" and her next novel.

Clelia (*Clélie, histoire romaine*, 1654–60) is Scudéry's most determined effort to redirect the *roman héroïque* away from superb actions to superb sentiments, from the adventure novel to the novel of manners, from male to female. It's her most transparently "modern" novel in that she is clearly writing about her own time and society; the 6th-century bce Roman setting is merely a backdrop for a series of conversations about manners, attitudes, and relationships like those she and her acquaintances engaged in after the Fronde had shaken their world. *Clelia* is an attempt, as Eleanor Dugan writes, "to impose a gracious structure on chaotic and potentially messy reality" (3:17).

For a parallel to the Fronde, Scudéry chose the equally tumultuous period in Roman history when the tyrant Tarquin the Proud was overthrown and the republic established (c. 509 bce). When Tarquin and his Etruscan allies then attacked Rome to regain his throne, a temporary truce was called and some young Roman hostages were sent to the tyrant's camp just across the Tiber river; in the historian Livy's account of what happened next, Scudéry found her heroine:

> Cloelia, an unmarried girl, was one of the hostages, held, as it happened, in the Etruscan lines not far from the Tiber; one day, with a number of other girls who had consented to follow her, she eluded the guards, swam across the river under a hail of missiles, and brought her company safe to

> Rome, where they were all restored to their families. Porsena [the Etruscan king] was furious, and sent to Rome to demand Cloelia's return —adding that the loss of the other girls did not trouble him; soon, however, his anger gave way to admiration of her more than masculine courage. . . . Friendly relations were thus restored, and the Romans paid tribute to Cloelia's courage, unprecedented in a woman, by an equally unprecedented honour: a statue representing her on horseback was set up at the top of the Sacred Way. (2.13)[35]

This heroic act, which earned Cloelia a cameo in Virgil's *Aeneid* (8.763), is the seed that bloomed into Scudéry's 10-volume, 2,500-page novel. She gave her heroine conventional good looks and a convenient backstory: Clelia (as her name is spelled in the mediocre 17th-century English translation) is the daughter of a Roman aristocrat named Clelius living in exile in Carthage because of his opposition to Tarquin. Clelia was raised with a foundling Clelius rescued and named Aronces, later revealed to be the son of Porsena, and the two children predictably grow up to fall in love with each other. The novel opens on their wedding day, interrupted by a cataclysmic earthquake that separates bride and groom; Clelia is then abducted by a stalkerish rival named Horatius, and later captured by Tarquin himself, who also falls in love with her, in spite of (or perhaps because of) his marriage to an ambitious harpy named Tullia. Like *Cyrus*, *Clelia* details the male protagonist's repeated attempts to rescue the female, ending just as predictably with their wedding.

Aronces is a typical storybook hero—a foundling who turns out to be a king's son—and like Oroondates finds himself torn between following his heart and following his national duty, since his father Porsena is allied with Tarquin. Clelia, on the other hand, is atypically active in a genre laden with passive heroines. Long before her history-making swim at the end of the novel, she finds herself, during one of her innumerable abductions, needing to distract some soldiers from going after Aronces, so "she did an act which was worthy her great soul, for turning her horse upon her left hand and lifting up her hood, 'Oi, cowards!' she said unto them, 'are ye not ashamed being thirty to fall upon three men, who have no other design but to set me at liberty?' This great and generous action did so surprise Horatius,

Aronces, and the commander of Tarquin's men, and wonder did so suspend their thoughts as they stopped and stayed awhile before they could tell what to do" (1.2). It surprises the reader too, as does Aronces's decision on the final page to allow his plucky bride to take control over his father's abdicated kingdom, content to serve as her consort (not recorded by Livy or Dionysius). Aronces displays old-school *générosité* and performs well enough on the battlefield, but Scudéry doesn't dwell on these testosterone-fueled conflicts as in her previous novels, and even deflates the air from such "heroic" brawls by observing "when a battle is fought betwixt four or five hundred thousand men, commonly a great part of them are only spectators of the fight, and the victory is often times gotten more by a panic fear or a tumultuous rout, which huge multitudes are subject unto, where order is hard to be kept, than by any true actions of valor or conduct of the captains" (1.2). *Touché*, brother Georges!

In this feminocentric novel, the important action takes places not on the battlefield but in the drawing room. Aronces and especially Clelia are surrounded by an entourage of sophisticated friends, most of whom are introduced in flattering verbal portraits, and Scudéry creates numerous occasions for them to sit around and tell romantic stories—as in her previous two novels, every chapter contains an embedded *histoire*—and to discuss a wide range of topics: ambition, jealousy, blondes versus brunettes, anger, glory, letter-writing, grief, old age, fear of death, ingratitude, idleness, talkativeness, conversation, social gatherings, flowers, joy versus cheerfulness, court life, religious tolerance, Pythagoreanism (which is mocked, despite the plea for tolerance), keeping secrets, unauthorized publication of private writings, punctuality, doubt and uncertainty, lying, happiness, novel-writing, raillery, constancy, indeed "a hundred different things" (4.2). These spirited discussions replicate the ones Scudéry enjoyed with her friends at her salon held on Saturdays; Paul Pellisson is here under the name Herminius, another Roman exile; the poet Jean-François Sarasin plays the gallant Amilcar (who is surprisingly killed off near the end; Sarasin died a few months after the first volume of *Clelia* appeared in 1654); I don't know who modeled for Plotine, Clelia's BFF, but her sarcastic wit enlivens many of the conversations; and Scudéry herself appears as Aricidia, the most popular hostess in Capua. In book 4 she introduces the Greek poet Anacreon into the mix—he would have been

about 60 at the founding of the Roman republic, but he's portrayed here as the life of the party—and shortly after, Amilcar reads a story about the poet Hesiod, which includes a dream-vision of the future of poetry that allows Scudéry to show off her extensive erudition as the muse Calliope discusses all the major poets from Hesiod's time down to the 17th century. (Anacreon perks up when she comes to him.) In the concluding book 5, when a male author would be vigorously racing to the climax, Scudéry continues to cuddle the reader with leisurely descriptions of landscapes and architectural wonders (based on the palaces at Vaux and Versailles), taking her time to include in this, her last extended-length novel, the entire contents of her well-upholstered mind. Most of this material is self-indulgent and unrelated to the main plot—Clelia and Aronces cool their heels in captivity during these digressions—but it constitutes Scudéry's fullest display of her talents and interests. No matter how far afield she goes, however, she keeps circling back to the topic of love and friendship, specifically the subtle gradations between the two.

The most famous example of the latter occurs two-thirds through the first chapter; in an account of Clelia's younger days, we're told that after Herminius met her, he asked how he might progress from her new acquaintance to a close friend; she playfully responds by drawing *La Carte de Tendre*, a Map of [the land of] Tenderness, which is included in the novel and is reproduced in virtually every book on Scudéry. (English versions can be found in Duggan [63] and Dugan [3:76–77].) It not only depicts the allegorical villages one must pass through—Sincerity, Goodness, Sensibility, Great Services—but also the wrong turns through Forgetfulness, Obloquy, or Mischief that can land one in the Lake of Indifference or the Sea of Enmity. The map resembles France, and up north where the English Channel would be is the Dangerous Sea, and beyond that Countries Undiscovered, both of which represent sensual love and wild passion, neither of which appealed to the spinster Scudéry, who favored tender friendship over love and/or marriage. In the novel, the map works fine as something a 16-year-old virgin would invent; in the real world, the fact that a 46-year-old woman would create this and share it with Pellisson and other middle-aged friends invited ridicule from those who got hold of a copy. They read it as a coquettish board game, whereas for Scudéry the map was about "the investing of relationships with a new dignity through the

rediscovery of genuine emotion," and "a desire to revalue the role of women, to create a framework for relationships in which women will be treated not as objects but as subjects, not as possessions but as individuals in their own right" (Munro, 9, 81). Scudéry lashed back in the novel by having Clelia complain that a bagatelle she "made to be seen but by five or six persons which have noble spirits should be seen by two thousand who scarce have any, and who hardly understand the best things" (1.1). It can be read as a map of Sapho's feminine utopia, but the banishment of sex from her land of Tenderness nonetheless betrays a certain immaturity.

Scudéry's discomfort with sex is also apparent in her handling of the most notorious episode in the founding of the Roman republic: the rape of Lucretia by Tarquin's son Sextus. Her subsequent suicide triggered the revolt—led by her admirer Brutus—that ousted Tarquin. Livy provides the sordid details, luxuriously elaborated upon in Shakespeare's famous poem, but squeamish Scudéry can't bear to dramatize the scene; it is so far off her map of civilized behavior that she merely hints at "this terrible accident, which all the world hath been acquainted with" and moves on (2.3). Her prudery also handicaps Clelia's 100-meter dash across the Tiber. Fleshing out Livy's account, Dionysius of Halicarnassus notes the hostages "had asked leave of their guards to go to the river and bathe, and after obtaining it they had told the men to withdraw a little way from the river till they had bathed and dressed themselves again, so that they should not see them naked; and the men having done this also, the maidens, following the advice and example of Cloelia, swam across the river and returned to the city" (5.33).[36] In all likelihood—though the whole incident probably belongs more to legend than history—the girls swam naked, but Scudéry not only keeps her young ladies fully clothed but adds that "their clothes were also of some use in this occasion to bear them up" on the paddleboards a sympathetic soldier built for them all (5.2)—all but Clelia, who swims fully clothed until she happens upon a horse midstream and somehow rides it back to shore. And then, "because these fair virgins were not in condition to go through the streets," Scudéry hurries them "to a house standing near the side of the river, where they dried themselves and changed their clothes which they sent for from their parents' houses."

Scudéry's ludicrous obsession with decorum, her unworldly fear of sex and the body, and her old-maidenly concepts of relationships are the main reasons why she was accused of preciousness, and they undercut her earnest attempts to introduce more civility and graciousness into her society. It's true that Scudéry injects a little sexual tension into her story—Sextus has his lustful eye on Clelia, whose fear of rape motivates her famous escape in Scudéry's version—but her G-rated view of the world became a target for ridicule. Regarding her *Carte de Tendre*, one French wag suggested a visit to the village of Jewelry was the quickest way to a woman's heart. As noted earlier, Molière got big laughs by portraying two provincial girls who, under the influence of Scudéry's novels, put on airs and expect their suitors to emulate Aronces and Cyrus. (To be fair, he is making more fun of naive readers than of Scudéry.) The conservative critic Nicolas Boileau, who loved the classics, was especially annoyed at Scudéry's romanticized history and mocks her protagonists in his *Heroes of Romances* (1664), a satiric dialogue after the manner of Lucian. In this amusing farce, set in Hades, Pluto is outraged to learn that great heroes like Cyrus, Brutus, and Horatius have been emasculated into foppish lovers by Scudéry and other heroic romanciers. (Boileau also parodies the idealized verbal portraits Scudéry used to introduce her characters.) He also went after her in his verse satires, and in canto 3 of his *Art of Poetry* (1674), he warned would-be poets: "Be careful, then, not to do as is done in *Clélie*, to give a French air and a French spirit to ancient Italy, and, painting our own portrait under Roman names, to make Cato a gallant and Brutus a beau."[37] By that time (as we'll see later), novelists were treating her works as fodder for parody.

Scudéry had a few defenders, such as Bishop Pierre-Daniel Huet; in his compact *History of Romances* (1669), French literature's first critical study of the novel, he announces the principal aim of a novelist is "the instruction of the mind, and correction of manners" (5), and not surprisingly, given Scudéry's didactic agenda, he concludes his survey by praising her novels as the culmination of the entire history of fiction. (Huet and Scudéry were friends, but even so, that must have delighted the old girl.) And Charles Sorel, surprisingly, praised her work. But after she died in 1701, her novels, along with all the other heroic novels, gradually fell out of fashion—though they left their scent on the 18th-century sentimental novel—and today

Scudéry is appreciated only by a handful of feminist critics, who rightly argue "her thousands of pages of analysis of the problems of the human heart certainly paved the way for the development of the psychological novel in France" (Orenstein, 60; cf. DeJean's *Tender Geographies*, 86–87). After *Clelia*, Scudéry went on to write a few shorter novels, which sound mildly interesting—they are summarized in chapter 3 of Aronson's monograph—but they've never been translated, and since I've given four months to this woman, I need to move on. She would charge me with "inconstancy," but *ars longa vita brevis*.

In Proust's *In Search of Lost Time*, which is as long as a *roman héroïque*, the young narrator describes two paths he could take from his house, Swann's way and the Guermantes's way. The authors of the heroic romance took d'Urfé's way; let's retrace our steps to follow those who took Sorel's way.

Near the end of *Clelia*, Amilcar hears "a certain noise" and turns to behold "a little machine painted, gilded, and covered with a kind of little canopy. It was surrounded with curtains, and carried by two slaves. Upon the top of this canopy was the portrait of a young and handsome man . . . [with] a cheerful and sprightly aspect. . . . And then a slave drawing a curtain which hid [the passenger], it was seen that he did not at all resemble his picture; and nevertheless, through all the alteration that had befallen him, he seemed still to have a certain laughing air which promised wit" (5.3). This is Scudéry's friend Paul Scarron (1610–60), a writer who specialized in burlesques and parodies, and who at the age 30 suffered a debilitating illness that left him "twisted like a pretzel, his head pulled left and down, and . . . in constant pain" (Dugan 1:180). But he continued to write, and in 1651 published the first volume of his *Comic Novel* (*Le roman comique*, 1651, 1657), a roisterous account of a provincial theater troupe that couldn't be more different from Scudéry's aristocratic fantasies. Just as Sorel proposed a more realistic alternative to the adventure novels of his time, Scarron felt that Spanish novellas of the sort written by Cervantes and Zayas provided a better model for new French fiction, and so during the heyday of the *roman héroïque* he countered with a *roman comique*.

Set in and around Le Mans in the 1650s—right there a major departure from the ancient settings of the heroic novels—*The Comic Novel* alternates between the daily lives of the touring actors and the gradual unfolding of their romantic histories. The troupe attracts a variety of spectators and supporters, most importantly a dwarfish country lawyer named Ragotin, who decides to fall in love with one of the actresses—he's not sure which, he just wants to fall in love as in a novel—and later applies to join the troupe. Pretentious Ragotin is the butt of much of the novel's cruel comedy, an outrageous series of skits involving overturned chamberpots, uncooperative horses, fights in the dark, practical jokes, loss of clothing, mishaps with farmyard animals (which wander through the inns the troupe stays at), and more shenanigans than a Three Stooges marathon. Scarron avoids Sorel's bawdiness, though during one mêlée at an inn, two of the actors take advantage of the confusion: "Destiny, having closed with a lusty wench and tucked up her smock, gave her a thousand slaps on the buttocks; Olive, who saw the company pleased with it, did the same to the other maids."[38] The troupe stages ramshackle but well-received versions of plays by leading dramatists of the time like Corneille, Tristan l'Hermite, and Scarron's own *Dom Japhet d'Arménie* (1653), which is interrupted by a brawl. When not performing, the "strollers" tell their local sponsors the stories of their lives, especially those of the company's allegorically stage-named principals, Destiny and Star. Posing as brother and sister, they are in truth a romantically involved couple with a complicated backstory and on the run from a nemesis named Saldagne, who eventually catches up with them and kidnaps Star. In this French provincial adaptation of the abduction topos of the *roman héroïque*, Destiny pursues his Star as heroically as Oroondates or Cyrus, rescues her, and marries her at the end.[39] In turn, the locals entertain the actors with some Spanish novellas in translation, embedded like the numerous *histoires* in the heroic novels. Thus *The Comic Novel* is not so much a repudiation of that genre as a successful attempt to streamline and modernize it, to modulate from fanciful romance to realistic novel, all in a relatively compact 460 pages.

The freshest thing about *The Comic Novel* is Scarron's playful attitude toward the conventions of fiction. More raconteur than narrator, he often interrupts his story to defend his metaphors and narrative choices from

anticipated criticism, to make sarcastic asides, examine proverbs and clichés, or feign difficulty writing his novel. In the first chapter, for example, in which he begins with highfalutin diction ("Bright Phoebus had already performed above half his career . . .") before dropping the act ("To speak more like a man, and in plainer terms, it was betwixt five and six of the clock"), he compares an actor carrying a bass fiddle on his back to "a great tortoise walking upon his hind feet," then pauses to defend his untraditional simile: "Some critic or other will perhaps find fault with the comparison, by reason of the disproportion between that creature and a man; but I speak of those great tortoises that are to be found in the Indies; and besides, I make bold to use the simile upon my own authority" (1.1) Boldly claiming "my own authority" over that of classical writers, Scarron fired one of the first shots in the battle between the ancients and moderns that would rage among the French and English literati over the next half century. In the preface to *Ibrahim*, Scudéry adviced novelists to follow the rules set by Heliodorus and other classical authors, but Scarron is claiming the freedom to rewrite or ignore the rules. "A man of my parts may make new rules whenever he pleases," Ragotin boasts (1.10). The narrator pretends he's making it up as he goes along, ending the short first chapter by noting "whilst the hungry beasts were feeding, the author rested a while, and bethought himself what he should say in the next chapter." Similarly, he begins 1.18: "I made the foregoing chapter a little of the shortest; perhaps this will prove somewhat longer; however, I am not sure of it; but we shall see." In between these two instances of playing dumb, Scarron makes a similar demurral that nonetheless hints he knows what he's doing:

> I am too much a man of honour not to advertise the courteous reader that if he be offended at all the silly trifles he has already found in this book, he will do well not to go on with the reading of it; for upon my conscience, he must expect nothing else, although the volume should swell to the bigness of that of *Cyrus the Great*: and if from what he has read he doubts what will follow, perhaps I am in the same quandary as well as he. For one chapter draws on another, and I do with my book as some do with their horses, putting the bridle on their necks and trusting to their good conduct. *But perhaps I have a fixed design*, and without filling my chapters with examples for imitation, shall instruct with

> delight after the same manner as a drunken man creates in us an aversion for drunkenness, and yet may sometimes divert us with his merry impertinence. Let us end this moral reflection and return to our strollers, whom we left in the inn. (1.12, my italics)

In his classic essay on early self-conscious narrators, Wayne C. Booth identifies "this claim to method in madness" as the first of its kind (170). Early critics took the uncertain narrator at his word and claimed *The Comic Novel* was an improvised, episodic narrative lacking structure, though more recent critics have demonstrated that sly Scarron knew exactly what he was doing and plotted his novel with care. "Although Scarron tells the reader over and over again that there is no order in his work," Frederick de Armas writes, "the balance and parallelism which exist in the different supporting characters of the novel are again proof that this simplicity and lack of order are only apparent, as in life, and the reader must order events in fiction, as Scarron orders them from life."[40]

Throughout, the narrator explains his methods and choices, saying of one character, "I could relate a thousand curious stories about her, which I pass by for fear of being tedious" (1.4), and of the acting profession, "There are a great many more things to be said upon this subject, but we must use them, and place them in several stations, for variety's sake" (1.8). Distancing himself from old-fashioned narrators, he writes of Ragotin, "Although an exact historian would now think himself obliged to tell all the most important particulars of this man's life, and the places wherein they happened, yet shall not I be very certain in what part of our hemisphere this little hovel of Ragotin's stood, whither he was carrying his brethren that were to be, being not yet admitted of their strolling order. It shall suffice then to inform you that is was on this side the Ganges, and not very far off from Sillé le Guillaume" (2.16) Following in the dusty footsteps of Cervantes' *Don Quixote*, which Scarron greatly admired, he indulges in flippant chapter headings, such as those for 1.11 ("Which Contains What You'll Find If You'll but Take the Pains to Read It") and 2.27 ("Which Has No Occasion for a Title"). Upstaging Don Quixote's metafictional mystification at discovering a novel about himself in a bookstore, Scarron claims ignorance of what happened next after one of Ragotin's

misadventures with some peasants, learning of the sequel only when the novel we are reading was already at the printers:

> The discreet reader may perhaps have a desire to know what these fellows would have had with Ragotin, and how they came to do nothing to him, but which I could not pretend to satisfy him in had it not come to my knowledge by chance. A priest of the Lower Mayne, a little melancholy mad, having been brought up to Paris by a suit of law, during the time his cause was preparing for a hearing would needs spend his time in printing some whimsical fancies of his own on the Revelation. He was so exceeding fertile in chimeras, and always so fond of his last productions, that he still blotted out the former, whereby his printers were forced the correct the same sheet at least twenty times over. This made them so mad that for every sheet he was obliged to look out for a new printer, till at last he happened on the person that printed this present romance, wherein he chanced to light upon some leaves which mentioned this same adventure I have told you. This priest knew more of the story than I who wrote it, having it seems been informed from the peasants' own mouths who had carried away Ragotin what had been the occasional of their so doing, which I could not possibly have come to the knowledge of. He saw at first dash wherein my relation was defective, and acquainted my printer therewith, who was extremely surprised at the information, thinking with the rest of the world that my romance had only been a fabulous story of my own invention. Supposing it might be of some service to me to put me in the right, my printer desired he would come and give me a visit, which he readily consented to. Then did I learn . . . [author narrates the rest of Ragotin's adventure]. These memoirs I had from this priest pleased me extremely and, I must own, did me no ordinary service; in return I thought I made him sufficient recompense by advising him not to proceed any farther in the publishing of his *Ridiculous Visionary Comment*. (2.16)

Taken literally, this episode would call into question the book's status as fiction and cast suspicion on the reliability of the narrator (willing to take a religious kook's relation for truth), but of course every reader knows

Scarron is having fun, treating the novel genre more like a toy than an antique.

Unlike Sorel, Scarron wasn't out to destroy the novel, just nudge it in a different direction. His story is filled with characters who like to read and discuss novels, one of whom (speaking for Scarron) believes

> nothing could be more diverting than our modern romances; that the French alone knew how to write good ones; however, that the Spaniards had a peculiar talent to compose little stories, which they called *novelas*, which are more useful, and more probable patterns for us to follow, than those imaginary heroes of antiquity, who grow oftentimes tedious and troublesome by being over-civil and over-virtuous. In short, that those examples which may be imitated are at least as beneficial as those that exceed all probability and belief; from all which he concluded that, if a man could write as good novels in French as those of Miguel de Cervantes, they would soon be as much in vogue as ever heroic romances have been. (1.21, "Which Perhaps Will Not Be Found Very Entertaining")

To that end, Scarron inserted six novellas into his narrative, adapted from collections by Alonso de Castillo Solórzano and María de Zayas. They are typical adventures of romantic intrigue, more gimmicky than the romanesque story of Destiny and Star, which unfolds in installments instead of as stand-alone recital pieces, but nevertheless thematically related to the larger concerns of *The Comic Novel*. Scarron wasn't alone in advocating Spanish novellas—in the 1650s, others published French imitations of them—and these shorter, more realistic works did indeed shape later 17th-century French fiction. But his greatest influence was on 18th-century comic English novelists like Fielding, Smollett, and Sterne, all of whom acknowledged his example. Anyone who remembers Lady Booby's attempted seduction of Joseph Andrews will gag with déjà vu when reading the gamey episode in *The Comic Novel* in which short, fat Madame Bouvillon "turned towards Destiny, giving him to understand by her large fiery cheeks and little sparkling eyes what sport she had in mind to be at; then she proceeded to take off her handkerchief from her neck and thereby discovered to her lover at least 10 pounds of exuberant flesh; that is to say,

near the third part of her bosom, the rest being distributed in two equal portions under her armpits" (2.10).[41] And Scarron's comparison of trusting his narrative to find its way like his horse will be echoed in *Tristram Shandy*. Beyond specific incidents, however, it is Scarron's realistic details, farcical situations, "merry impertinence," and metafictional musings on writing that appealed to later novelists—German and French, as well as English—an appeal that is as fresh today as it was in their time.[42]

Among the others publishing French-style Spanish novellas in the 1650s was Scarron's fellow salon habitué Jean Regnault de Segrais (1642–1701), who had published a 4-volume heroic romance (*Bérénice*, 1648–51) but was better known as the secretary to the "Grand Mademoiselle," the duchess of Montpensier (1627–93), whose dozen or more broken engagements, beginning at age 5, provide a running joke in Dugan's *Precious Lies of Madeleine de Scudéry*. In 1656 Segrais published *Les Nouvelles françaises* (French Novellas), an anthology-novel clearly modeled on the *Heptameron* of Marguerite of Navarre, Montpensier's great-great-grandmother. What's significant about the book is not the half-dozen novellas it contains—with one exception, old-fashioned romantic intrigues—but the frame tale.[43]

At the end of the Fronde, rebellious Princess Aurélie (= Montpensier) retreats with five fellow *frondeuses* to her château and they decide to rebel instead against current fiction by telling and discussing stories, which the princess's secretary (= Segrais) will record. (Based on this arrangement, DeJean proposes that Montpensier is the real author of *Les Nouvelles françaises*, and Segrais only her editor. This is plausible given the reluctance of Frenchwomen to publish under their own names, as in Scudéry's case; in fact, decades later Segrais's name would appear on the title pages of Madame de Lafayette's novels.) As in other critifictions (see p. 580 of my previous volume), the ladies begin by discussing recent romances from *Astrea* to *Artamène*, dismissing them as passé; what is needed, as both Sorel and Scarron proposed, were shorter, realistic fictions set in modern times and using French names. Princess Aurélie narrates the first novella, and commenting on a certain action in it afterward with her friends, she makes a crucial distinction that sets a new course for French fiction:

> We have undertaken to recount things as they are, and not as they ought to be: And this seems to me to be the difference between the *roman* [heroic novel] and the *nouvelle* [novel]; that the heroic novel writes about things as propriety dictates, and in the style of a poet; but the new novel must be more historical, and try to give images of things as we see them occur ordinarily, instead of as our imagination constructs them.

"Her program proved so revolutionary," DeJean writes of Montpensier/Aurélie, that the repurposing of fiction here and in the novel's prologue "has been commonly referred to as the first manifesto of the modern French novel and considered"—along with Scudéry's preface to *Ibrahim* and Huet's *History of Romances*—"one of the three major seventeenth-century theoretical statements on prose fiction" (54).

Unfortunately, as DeJean admits, the novellas the ladies tell don't live up to the hype. "In fact, Aurélie's story of a German gentleman disguised as a lady-in-waiting to his mistress, while it is brief and has a contemporary setting, is as incredible as any tale from *Artamène*" (54–55). Donovan says most of the other novellas are "flat stereotypical examples of the genre," and that only "one replicates the comic realism emerging in Scarron and others at the time" (118). And even that one ("Honorine"), according to Segrais's modern editor, is derived from one of the stories in Sorel's *Nouvelles françoises* of 1623.

As I said, Segrais was a friend of Scarron, and Montpensier visited him and gave him financial support. Everyone liked Scarron; crippled and 42, he even inspired a beautiful 16-year-old to marry him. (She appears as Lyriane in *Clelia* but achieved greater fame after her husband's death as Madame de Maintenon, Louis XIV's mistress and second wife.) Everyone, that is, but Savinien Cyrano de Bergerac (1619–55), the big-nosed satirist and gay blade. They had been friends up until the Fronde, and both initially supported the rebels, but opportunistic Cyrano flipflopped to support Mazarin and the king's party, then wrote a broadside mocking his friend's progressive rheumatism in the grossest terms: "People say that for more than 10 years nature has twisted his neck without being able to strangle him. His body is a rotten gallows where the Devil has hung a soul and in animating this fetid and rotting cadaver, Heaven wishes to discard his soul on the dung heap before his death" (quoted/translated by Phelps, 146).

Critics sympathetic to Cyrano write off these and similar letters as "little more than exercises in outrageous style" (Harth, 201), so we'll give him a pass. Around the same time Scarron began writing his *Comic Novel*, Cyrano began a different kind of comic novel, an early excursion into science fiction entitled *The Other World* (*L'Autre monde*). Too radical to be published while Cyrano was alive, "his manuscript circled in samizdat among the underground intelligentsia of his day," as his most recent English translator notes (Brown, xiii). Like Scarron's, it's a three-part novel missing its final third; the first and most popular part, in which the narrator travels to the moon and back, was published posthumously (and in censored form) in 1657; the second, in which he journeys to the sun, appeared in 1662; the third, a journey to the stars, went missing after Cyrano's mysterious death and, unlike the manuscript for part 1, has never been recovered.[44]

The Other World is essentially a vehicle for Cyrano's libertine philosophy, a utopian fiction whereby he can mock conventional beliefs and propose rational alternatives. Gazing up at the moon one night and speculating about it with his friends, who believe in myths and old wives' tales about the moon, narrator Drycona—his name, an anagram for "Cyrano d'," isn't supplied until part 2—suggests the moon is an inhabited world like Earth, which serves as *its* moon. This earns his friends' ridicule, even though Drycona cites recent speculations by Copernicus and Kepler, the first of many conflicts in the novel between modern, scientific thinking and premodern myths and superstitions. Determined to prove his thesis, and comparing himself to Prometheus stealing fire from heaven, Drycona first invents a kind of hot-air balloon powered by bottles of dew, which lifts him into the sky as the dew evaporates. This carries him from the suburbs of Paris to New France (Canada), where he is first attacked by Indians then taken by French soldiers to Quebec's viceroy, with whom he discusses astronomy. (The Jesuit fathers are convinced he's a sorcerer.) He argues that people (especially Catholics) cling to the idea that the earth is the center of the universe only because of "the intolerable pride of human beings," another recurrent theme in *The Other World*, especially part 2.[45] Drycona builds another flying machine, which crashes soon after takeoff; the soldiers who recover it strap rockets to it for a fireworks display, and Drycona

jumps in just as they light the fuse and gets blasted into space, and after a few days crash-lands on the moon.

Thereafter, as in most utopian fiction, the narrator encounters one wonder after another, all of which provide occasions for Cyrano to satirize the lunatic customs of Earth. Drycona lands in a luxurious garden that he soon learns is the original Garden of Eden (the Tree of Life broke his fall); he's told by groundskeeper Elijah that when Adam and Eve were evicted from Eden, they went to Earth. Like a blasphemous midrash, this section has fun with the stories in Genesis, and when Elijah explains that the tempting serpent became man's intestines, Drycona jokes:

> "Yes, indeed," I said, interrupting him, "I have noticed how, as this serpent is always trying to escape from man's body, you can see its head and neck emerging at the bottom of our bellies. Furthermore, God does not suffer man alone to be tormented by it: it was His will that it should rise up against woman to inject its poison into her and that the swelling should last for nine months after the bite. And the proof that I speak according to the word of the Lord is that He curses the serpent, saying that in vain will it cause women to stumble by hardening itself against her, for in the end she will bruise its head." (38)

Elijah is not amused.

Later, Drycona is captured and made the moon queen's pet—the lunarians are giants—and specifically as a mate for her other toy human, who turns out to be Domingo Gonzalez, the wee protagonist of Francis Godwin's English novella *The Man in the Moon* (probed later in chapter 4), which was translated into French in 1648 and was Cyrano's initial source of inspiration. (Accepting his role as mate to another man, Drycona drops the first of many hints that he is gay, as was his author; for Cyrano, an alternative world would tolerate alternative lifestyles.) From Godwin's novella comes the most unusual feature of this novel: while commoners run about on all fours and communicate via full-body sign language, the upstanding aristocrats communicate via music—switching to instruments when their throats tire of singing—and instead of having proper names are designated by music phrases, like Wagnerian leitmotifs. Thus a rival king is called , a lady-in-waiting who takes an interest in Drycona answers to

, and for one moonman we're given both forms of his name: "the wicked , whose name in the common people's jargon was a fillip of the finger on the right knee" (94). Specific rivers and streams are likewise notated musically (88).[46]

Throughout, Drycona has erudite discussions with a variety of beings, one of whom identifies himself as Socrates' demon, on a variety of topics. Just as Scudéry's novels replicate the better conversations in the salons of Paris, *The Other World* echoes the cutting-edge discussions among intellectuals of the time on religion, cosmology, physics, the status of women, moral relativism, environmentalism, philosophy, geology, animal rights, health care, parent-child relationships, genetics, euthanasia, sex—all with a freedom that wouldn't have been allowed on Earth. Despite its *Alice in Wonderland* tone, *The Other World* provides a liberal education in mid-17th-century French thought.

Cyrano reserves his most radical material for the end of part 1; in a series of discussions with the well-educated son of one of his hosts, Drycona plays the Catholic straight man as the moon-libertine mounts increasingly blasphemous arguments against religious beliefs, provides a scientific origin of the universe, and advocates atheism. At that point, a black demon arrives to take the freethinker down to hell at Earth's core; Drycona latches on for the ride, bails out over Italy, then makes his way back to France.

Part 2 is both more realistic and more fanciful. The first 25 pages read like something from Sorel's *Francion*, which Drycona cites in part 1 (53). After Drycona returns to France, a friend encourages him to write and publish the story we've just read, which results in being hounded and imprisoned by the authorities as a sorcerer, all in the comic-realist style of Sorel. (Though played for laughs, this sequence dramatizes the very real persecution libertine writers risked at that time, and the reason Cyrano didn't publish his novel; DeJean notes, "As late as 1662, Claude Le Petit was condemned to be strangled and then burned for the alleged libertine content of his works."[47]) Near the end of part 2, Cyrano revives the literalization of love imagery from *The Extravagant Shepherd*. Like Scarron, Cyrano's narrator is fond of sarcastic asides—stuck in a dank, rat-filled prison cell, he cracks, "I think all I need to be the complete Job was a wife and a potsherd" (123)—and like his crippled friend was an early combatant in the battle of the

ancients and moderns. For all its philosophical discussions and visionary inventions (trailer homes, audiobooks with players and earphones, light bulbs), *The Other World* is a comic novel like those of Sorel and Scarron, even a kind of sci-fi picaresque, with far more adventures and capers than most talking-head utopian fictions. Given the popularity of Sorel's *Histoire comique de Francion*, it's not surprising that Cyrano's first editor published part 1 as *L'Histoire comique, ou Voyage dans la lune.*

Drycona builds another, better spacecraft (involving mirrors and vacuum pressure) and escapes from prison; over the next 22 months he travels past the moon, Venus, and Mercury, to land on one of the sunspots, which Cyrano regards as satellites of the sun. A source of intense light rather than heat, the sun refines Drycona of his earthly dross and renders him diaphanous. He meets a solarian, who explains the lay of the land, then ventures out on his own. Here Cyrano's language and imagination soar —"This land is so luminous that it resembles snowflakes on fire" (151)—as he encounters jeweled trees and talking pomegranates, all of which "disintegrated into little men that saw, felt, and walked and, as if to celebrate their birthday at the very moment of their birth, began to dance all around me" (154). They reassemble into a beautiful young man, who praises the power of the imagination, which Cyrano displays in spades. Drycona then falls afoul of some birds and is tried for crimes against avianity, but is rescued at the last minute by a parrot who he had freed back on Earth.[48] Then he encounters some Greek-speaking trees that/who, like the birds, criticize humans like him for mistreating them under the arrogant assumption they have dominion over all the earth (see Gen. 1:26). Reveling in "the other world" of the imagination, Cyrano then tells an Ovidian fable about same-sex relationships, a homosexual origin myth that leads to examples of other unorthodox couplings. Learning that the sun is paradise for Earth's greatest philosophers, Drycona meets Tommaso Campanella, author of the utopian dialogue *The City of the Sun*. Together they welcome the latest arrival, René Descartes (who died 11 February 1650); Descartes begins to speak when the manuscript breaks off.

About 30 pages longer than part 1, it is likely part 2 didn't go on much longer, but who knows. This part is even louder in its celebration of liberty

and the freedom of the imagination, even harsher in its condemnation of humankind. During Drycona's trail by birds, they poop on man:

> Briefly, it is a bald beast, a plucked bird, a chimera compounded of all kinds of creatures and which brings terror to all; man, I say, so stupid and so vain that he is convinced we were made only to serve him; man, whose mind is so perceptive, but who cannot tell sugar from arsenic, and will swallow hemlock, which his fine judgement tells him is parsley; man, who maintains that reasoning can only be based on the evidence of his senses, but who has the feeblest, dullest, and most faulty senses of all the creatures; man, in short, whom nature created out of pieces of everything, like a freak, but whom she inspired with the ambition to rule all other animals and exterminate them. (166)

An intriguing metafictional ploy that presumably would have been explained in the missing conclusion is the reference to a book Socrates' demon gives Drycona before he leaves the moon, namely *The States and Empires of the Sun*—the full title of part 2.

Though incomplete, *The Other World* is a milestone in French fiction: it is France's first major science-fiction novel, its first major philosophical novel (especially regarding libertinism before that term became equated with sexual predation), a radical call for the rights of women and animals (and even trees and vegetables), for liberty and imagination, for rational thought over religious dogma, all conveyed in lively prose that caroms from slapstick to scientific to psychedelic. It anticipates (if not directly inspired) Swift's *Gulliver's Travels*, Voltaire's *Micromegas*, Sade's libertine novels, and any number of later sci-fi fantasies, though it's closer to those of Vonnegut than Verne. *This* is the Cyrano de Bergerac who should be famous, not the sentimental hero of stage and screen.[49]

Another overlooked milestone in French fiction is *La Prétieuse, ou Le Mystère des ruelles* (1656–58), a complicated, 800-page novel by Michel de Pure (1620–80) that unfortunately has not been translated into English.[50] The title roughly translates "The Pretentious Woman, or The Mystery of the Salons," though *ruelle* denotes a more exclusive, intimate gathering.[51] Harth describes it as "a kind of Bildungsroman which records a

protagonist's journey through the world of the salons. . . . the male character Philonime, who is initiated into the feminine world of the ruelles by Agathonte, learns early that conversation reigns supreme in the salon" (35), as opposed to the male world of the academy, where writing reigns. Poor Philonime endures nearly 80 stories narrated by women, including stories within stories (within stories (within stories)), organized, Maher explains, into "more or less sixteen 'chapters,' each one of these being set off not only typographically but also spatio-temporally as an afternoon session hosted by one particular *précieuse* . . . which excludes twelve *abstract narratives* and thirteen instances where potential narrators evoke, but do not actually tell, a staggering total of 1,027 *potential narratives*," and which includes "an embedded novel, 'le Roman de la Pretieuse,' in which many of the characters functioning in the embedding novel are depicted. These excerpts are read aloud in a *ruelle* in the presence of these very same characters" (129). This sounds like an astonishing feat of narrative architecture, one left open-ended at the end, for the concluding sentence is "there must not be any conclusion to this novel; as in France kings never die, the *Prétieuse* must not end" (trans. Jaouën, 124).

As de Pure exposes the private world of *ruelles*, he goes "about solving a problem that is fairly technical in nature," as Jaouën explains: "how to break free from previous models, how to do away with the mythical setting of d'Urfé's *Astrée* and the remote historical background of Scudéry's *Cyrus*, how to write a 'realistic' novel without falling into burlesque (Scarron's *Roman comique*, 1651–57), or satire (Cyrano's *États et empires de la lune*, published posthumously in 1657)" (116). De Pure's novel is both a critifiction—like the women in Segrais's novel, *les précieuses* discuss gender issues in language and literature—and a metafiction, for after listening to the embedded novel *La Prétieuse*, they criticize it at length in a way that doubles as a critique of the larger novel that contains it. Several of the women express dissatisfaction with current fiction and want "something different," as one of them says. "At stake in this debate is simply the future of the genre," Jaouën insists. "How to break away from the heroic novel and its lovelorn characters without falling into the trivial account of everyday life? The novel is caught between an aristocratic ethos yearning for the epic adventures of exceptional heroes and a bourgeois appeal for a more realistic kind of narrative" (123). *La Prétieuse* certainly sounds like

"something different," and since a new critical edition was recently published in France, I'm hoping that an English translation will someday follow.

Though it's probably not what the ladies had in mind, Abbé de Pure followed *La Prétieuse* with the first novel set in the future, *Épigone, histoire du siècle futur* (Epigone, Story of the Future Century, 1659).[52] This is essentially a heroic romance in which Prince Epigone goes into exile to escape the civil war in his own country, accompanied by his fiancée and his mentor. After the usual storm at sea, they wind up in Clodovie and undergo the usual adventures. While previous heroic romanciers set their novels in ancient lands in the distant past, and often faced charges of inverisimilitude for taking liberties with known history and geography, de Pure solved that problem by setting his novel in the unknowable future. This also freed him to mix in some fantasy elements, such as a crystal translating device that allows Epigone to communicate with strangers, and the tribe of *Mignones* (coquettes) who occupy one headland. The latter are the butt of a cruel joke when Epigone's mentor is told that possessed women are beheaded, but prior to that their craniums are opened and their brains sacrificed to evil spirits. When he asks "why it is necessary to behead the prisoner, since removing the brain is surely fatal, he is told that experience in the land of coquettes has amply demonstrated that brains are not necessary to live and live happily" (Alkon, 36). De Pure doesn't envision any technological advances, and in fact *Epigone* is closer to other genres of the time (imaginary voyage, political allegory, utopian fiction) than to what "futuristic fiction" evokes; he seems to have been more interested in injecting new life into the dying heroic romance genre than in inventing a new one. Though labeled "Part 1," *Epigone* was abandoned after 224 pages, and it would be more than 70 years before anyone else thought of setting a novel in the future.

There are two more comic novels to be savored before the French novel lost its sense of humor for a while. Both mock the moribund *roman héroïque*, for even though novelists had stopped writing them in the 1660s, there were plenty of readers still lapping them up, especially women. Our next two novelists set their satiric sights on those naïfs.

Clearly inspired by Scarron's *Roman comique*, a writer named Antoine Furetière (1619–88) published in 1666 *Le Roman bourgeois*, translated five years as *The City Romance*.[53] But the title needs to be rendered *The Bourgeois Romance* to identify the main target of Furetière's satire: not city-dwellers but the social climbing, pretentious members of the middle class known as the bourgeoisie. As Thomas DiPiero puts it, Furetière mocks the "ironic appropriation of aristocratic values by characters who fail to understand the class they try so desperately to imitate" (169). Furetière's related target is the aristocratic novels these booboisies take their cues from, which is where the real fun is: wryly exposing the worn-out devices of romantic fiction, this avant-garde antinovel looks back to *The Extravagant Shepherd* and forward to *Tristram Shandy*. Furetière's third target of satire is the law (which the author practiced briefly when younger): the novel is thick with lawyers, advocates, law-clerks, litigants, and judges; there are no courtroom scenes, just the ludicrous mating calls of lawyers in love and pettifogging negotiations over contracts and wills, qualifying *The Bourgeois Romance* as one of the first legal novels, as well as a textbook example of critifiction. And finally there is money: everyone and everything has a price in Furetière's city, and he shows us the price tags.

The novel is divided into two unequal, seemingly unrelated parts, a deliberate departure from the structural uniformity and narrative continuity of the heroic romances. (As for the relationship between the two parts, the flippant narrator says he'll "leave the care of their connection to him that binds the book" [160].) The first and longer part tracks the quest for husbands by two bourgeois girls, a streetwise orphan named Lucrèce, who has earned a seedy dowry working in "the fogs on the River Loire,"[54] and a sheltered girl named Javotte. Passing around the collection basket at church one day, where her prettiness attracts cash with overtones of prostitution, Javotte catches the eye of a foppish junior lawyer named Nicodème; he knows her lawyer father and begins to court her with high-flown phrases from Scudéry's *Cyrus* and *Clelia*, which only baffles the simple girl. He soon proposes marriage, but the banns are challenged by his former flame Lucrèce—the opposite of her virtuous namesake in *Clelia*, the author notes—who has since then been knocked up, or given a "green gown" as the translator puts it (44), the result of some splendor in the grass with a young

lord who then disappeared. While Nicodème tries to pay her off, Javotte's father welcomes another suitor for his daughter, yet another lawyer named Jean Bedou, a middle-aged miser. How cheap is he? So cheap people said he put bread crumbs in his pocket with his money "to keep it from rusting, as knives seldom used are kept bright in bran" (66). Javotte cares as little for him as for smooth-talking Nicodème, and is encouraged to start attending a Scudéresque salon, where she meets a fop named Pancrace, who sends her all five volumes of *Astrea* so that she can learn to play the game of love. Falling under its spell, she of course identifies with Astrea and sees Celadon in Pancrace (who bones up on d'Urfé's novel to remember how to act); "Pancrace sent her other romances," we're informed, "which she read no less greedily night and day, and made so good use of her time that she quickly became one of the nimblest cacklers of the parish" (136). Javotte's father, outraged by her pert refusal to sign the contract to marry Bedou (unlike earlier novelists, Furetière specifies the paperwork involved), sends her to a nunnery in the suburbs, where she meets Lucrèce, hiding there to deliver her illegitimate baby. After Pancrace helps Javotte escape so they can elope, the jilted Bedou, insisting "that he would never marry unless he lighted on a wife that came out of some strict nunnery" (156), winds up marrying the scheming Lucrèce.

At this point, two-thirds through the novel, the narrator abandons these characters to tell the story of the ludicrous rivalry between an old has-been author named Charroselles (who was at the salon Javotte attended), a "litigious bitch" (184) named Collantine, who spends all her time filing frivolous lawsuits, and an incompetent magistrate named Belastre, who tries to woo Collantine à la mode with poetry before conceding to Charroselles, who marries Collantine. She sues for divorce the very next day. To tell the rest of their story, "ten volumes would hardly suffice," the narrator explains, "and I must pass the limits prescribed by the most swollen romances" (243). So instead he concludes with a brief fable about a fairy dog who can catch all animals and a fairy hare who can outrun all predators. "The solution of this difficulty is that they run still. So it is with the suits of Collantine and Charroselles: they have ever pleaded, plead still, and plead will, as long as heaven spares their lives" (244).

That cock-and-bull ending is the last of many sardonic departures from the conventional novel. Beginning by parodying the opening lines of

Virgil's *Aeneid*, the narrator quickly disavows that tradition; unlike epics and heroic romances, he doesn't plan to start in medias res, which can puzzle readers:

> This usually engages them in a confusion that ends not till some charitable squire or waiting gentlewoman comes to illustrate what hath passed, by the discovery or surprisal of what tends to understanding the history.
>
> Instead of deceiving you by such vain subtleties, I will honestly and plainly tell you some little tales or gallantries happened amongst persons that are neither heroes nor heroines, that neither defeat armies nor subdue kingdoms, but being honest people of an ordinary condition fairly jog on the highway. . . . To avoid the over-worn paths which others have beaten, the scene of my romance shall be movable, sometimes in one quarter of the town, sometimes in another. I will begin with that which most of the city called Place Maubert.
>
> An author less faithful and more desirous to appear eloquent would be very loath to omit a magnificent description of this place. (2–3)

But not our plain-dealing author. Throughout, he tells us he's skipping over predictable stuff, the set-pieces that swell heroic novels into many volumes, "blowing them up as butchers do their meat" (154). Reading this novel is like watching a DVD with the director's commentary on; as we follow the action, the narrator tells us about his narrative choices, especially what scenes he has left out, like a description of Place Maubert above, substituting mocking remarks on the exaggerated nonsense a heroic novelist would tell you. ("But when he came to describe the Carmelites' church, . . . he would present you a temple as beautiful as Diana's of Ephesus, supported by 100 Corinthian pillars, fill all the niches with statues made by Phidias or Praxiteles . . ." [3].) He withholds a complete description of Javotte "as is usual on such occasions" (6), races through Nicodème's courtship, then announces their wedding plans on page 18, even though he realizes readers reared on multivolume romances will feel rushed:

> I am afraid there is not any reader (be he never so courteous) but will cry out here is a pitiful romancer. This story is neither long nor intricate, and

> a wedding resolved already which is not wont to be till the tenth volume; but I beg his pardon for cutting short and riding post to the conclusion, and think him not a little obliged to me for freeing him from the impatience that torments many readers to see an amorous history last so long without being able to divine the conclusion; yet he may please to observe that many things fall between the cup and the lip, and this wedding is not in such forwardness as he imagines. (19)

Though it's in his "power to form here a heroine that shall be stolen away as often as I have a mind to write volumes," he is not going to pad his novel with the "common materials that build the intrigues of romances" (46). However, for the benefit of those still addicted to heroic romances, he makes a few mock concessions; the first time Javotte attends the salon, she doesn't say anything, so while the narrator records what others say, he suggests: "To make this digression excusable whilst it lasts, imagine if you please that it happens here as in other romances: that Javotte is gone to sea, that a storm casts her on a foreign shore, or that some ravisher hath carried her to parts so remote we cannot in a long time hear from her" (87). Similarly, when Nicodème drops out of the story, the narrator states, "He is now at liberty to furnish matter for some other history of a like nature, and I believe he will not come any more on the stage; that [this] may not surprise you, suppose him to be slain, murdered, or massacred by some misfortune, which might easily be effected by an author less conscientious" (139). Later, he invites readers to fill in what they finding wanting; when Pancrace tries to convince Javotte to elope, the author sighs:

> I do not hold it necessary to give you here particularly all his passionate expressions and arguments to win her to this, no more than the virtuous resistances made by Javotte with the combats between love and honour in her heart, for you are little versed in romances if your memory (be it never so bad) retain not twenty or thirty of them. These use to be so common that I have known some, that to express how much of a history they had read, would say, I am at the eighth stealing away the lady, instead of I am at the eighth tome. . . . The greatest orator or poet in the world, let him be never so inventive, can tell you nothing in this kind that you have not heard a hundred times before. . . . You may interlard this

> [present scene] with such as best pleases you, and suit best with the subject. I thought once to have ordered the stationer [printer] to have left here some empty sheets for the more convenient reception of that you make choice of; . . . (150–51)

—like the blank page Sterne leaves in *Tristram Shandy* for the reader to write his own description of the widow Wadman (6.38). Like Scarron, our "conscientious" narrator often admits he's not certain what happens at some points because he lacks the omniscience of characters in heroic romances (especially those who weren't present at the scenes they describe), but no matter; when the narrator tells the experienced reader "that our lord was in love with Lucrèce &c, you may easily guess and add what he said, or at least might have said to charm her" (41–42). But he doesn't avoid the staples of fiction out of laziness; it's because these staples "have been presented in so many forms, and so often turned and patched, they can no longer be made use of" (46). As Barth wrote in "The Literature of Exhaustion," literary conventions wear out after a while and then need to be either treated ironically (as Furetière does) or replaced, not recycled endlessly by unimaginative hacks.

So Furetière replaces the predictable with the unpredictable. He gives us realistic details new to the novel, such as the morning sickness a pregnant woman suffers ("vomitings, qualms, and pains at her heart and stomach" [59]). Characters speak naturally, and there are realistic descriptions of the muddy streets of Paris, of the clothes, food, and pastimes of the bourgeoisie, parents who coax their children to perform for company, convinced that visitors will find them as cute as they do, and details about household furnishings.

There are other novelties. Furetière was the first French novelist to make judicious use paragraphs. (Earlier novels went on for pages without a paragraph break.) Shortly after commencing "The History of the Bourgeois Lucrèce"—which parodies the inset tales of heroic romances—the narrator notes that the city girl's ill-gotten dowry (about $100 grand) now qualifies her for a husband of a certain economic status and provides us with a price list for the marriage mart:[55]

For a girl with a dowry of $5,000, or up to $15,000	*She should expect a shopkeeper at the Palais-Royal, a junior clerk, or legal agent*
For one with $15,000 and less than $30,000	*A silk or cloth merchant, controller of weights and measures, counsel at the Paris district court, steward of a lord*
For one with $30,000 and less than $50,000	*A high court solicitor, court officer, notary, or registrar*
For one with $50,000 up to $75,000	*A barrister, treasury inspector, inspector of rivers and forests, assistant prosecutor, and inspector of the mint*
For one with $75,000 up to $112,500	*An auditor, tax commissioner, or bond treasurer*
For one with $112,500 up to $187,500	*A tax judge or member of the king's council*
For one with $187,500 up to $375,000	*A member of the parliamentary court or treasury secretary*
For one with $375,000 up to $750,000	*A high court judge, Treasury inspector, secretary to the privy council, law lord*
For one with $750,000 up to $1,500,000	*A Lord of Appeal, a real marquis, treasury lord, duke and peer*

A character proposes "publishing a gazette which in the form of a journal should acquaint the world with what is new" in fashion (37), more than two centuries before the debut of *Vogue*. At the literary salon Javotte attends, a guest reads aloud "A Tale of Cupid Run away from His Mother," an allegorical history of love from bestial couplings up to the "mercenary love" of the novel's present, when Cupid contracts syphilis. (The tale includes a cruel, caddish portrait of Madeleine de Scudéry under the name

Polymathia; the character Charroselles is an equally nasty caricature of Charles Sorel during his declining years.[56]) Near the end of the novel, just where the climax would be in a traditional work, we're given a 40-page inventory of the papers of a recently deceased hack writer named Mythophilacte, previously unmentioned. We get to read his will, a catalog of his unpublished manuscripts—including "*The Perpetual Motion, or Project of an Universal Romance*. Divided into as many tomes as the stationer is willing to pay for" (221)—the detailed table of contents of his 4-volume *Of Dedications of Books*, a price list for characters and situations in novels, another for different kinds of poems, and finally, a dedicatory epistle to the hangman, who performs a valuable service when starving writers, "unable to support contempt and poverty, are reduced to despair: now these wanting the courage of Judas to hang themselves, you by taking that pains might ease them of a great deal of misery" (235). This is a remarkable sequence, creating a tragicomic portrait of a character solely from documents, and documents rarely seen in novels before. "The novelty of this surprised all of them, for the like had not been seen posted in Paris" (237).

The Bourgeois Romance is a revolutionary novel, from its oxymoronic title (which sounded as incongruous to readers in the 1660s as "rock opera" sounded in the 1960s) to its fairytale ending, achieving its artistic cohesion not from conventional story arcs but from thematic concerns (the abuses of law and literature) and iterative imagery generated from the obsession with money by the bourgeoisie, people who know the price of everything but the value of nothing. (This includes bourgeois writers like Charroselles and Mythophilacte.) Fusing social and literary criticism, Furetière mordantly exposes the emptiness of the predictable novels they read (and write), offering in their place an unpredictable if unflattering novel about them in the vain hope the corrective lenses of satire will help them see themselves more clearly. Such people live their lives according to unexamined rules as artificial as those the heroic romancers followed in their fictions; hence, as Katherine Wine points out, "bourgeois society is portrayed as possessing no more utility or inner substance than the most trite of fictional productions" (56). You are what you read.

Furetière's novel, though like most experimental fiction not very popular, had some influence in its day: both Jean Racine (in *Les Plaideurs*, 1668) and William Wycherley (in *The Plain Dealer*, 1676) borrowed the Charroselles/Collantine subplot for their plays, and various French and English comic novelists of the late 17th and early 18th centuries learned from it. Tallemant called Furetière a "pest," and his caricatures of Scudéry and Sorel are reprehensible, but he's a key figure in the history of the alternative novel. *The Bourgeois Romance* is #4 on André Gide's 10 desert-island novels.

The sharp reader can divine the basic story of our final French farce from its full title: *The Mock Clelia, Being a Comical History of French Gallantries and Novels in Imitation of Dom* [*sic*] *Quixote* (*La Fausse Clélie, histoire françoise galante et comique*, 1671), by a dramatist named Adrien-Thomas Perdou de Subligny (1636–96). Set in the present, this delightful novel opens one summer's eve as the playboy Marquis de Riberville, strolling through his estate at Vaux-le-Vicomte, encounters a beautiful stranger and her matronly attendant. Next thing he knows, she is abducted by someone; "He had too bravely begun the evening not to play the hero of a romance," we're told metafictionally (5), so Riberville pursues but loses them. The next morning in bed, however, hearing a sound in the adjoining study, he finds her there asleep and "half naked." After he admires the view and steals some kisses, she wakes, and when asked who she is, "The beauteous lady made answer in this manner: 'Know, generous stranger, that I am daughter to the valiant Clelius, who was forced to fly to Carthage, thereby to avoid the fury of the last of the Tarquins, and who upon his return contributed so much to the liberty of Rome. My name is Clelia, and my actions are so famous that none but they who live in the most distant countries can be ignorant of them' " (11). I nearly fell off the couch laughing. We soon learn that this "Madam Quixote" (as she's called the in the book's running heads) is named Juliette d'Arvianne. As a child, she went to England with her father, who took refuge there for political reasons (like Clelius in Carthage) after saving and raising a shipwrecked foundling (like Aronces) who later turns out to be an English nobleman. After they return to Paris, the 14-year-old Juliette reads Scudéry's *Clelia* and is astonished at the parallels to her own life; "for two years together she pursued them day and night," reading the huge novel a hundred times (22).

The day she is to marry her Aronces in Bordeaux, an earthquake erupts and a rival (actually her jealous cousin) abducts her; “a fever supervening so discomposed her mind as, little by little, she came at length to imagine herself to be Clelia” (24). Now 20, she is largely recovered, but still goes into a fit whenever she hears anything that reminds her of Scudéry’s novel. At one point she even dives into a canal, believing she is crossing the Tiber.

Riberville shares her story with some aristocratic visitors, who are the main characters in this sparkling novel: his friend the Chevalier de Montal, a judge’s wife named Mme de Moulionne, and three fun-loving society girls: Mlle de Barbesieux, Mlle de Velzers from Holland, and a Breton belle, quiet Mlle de Kermas. Like the aristocrats who humor Don Quixote in Cervantes’ novel and Lysis in Sorel’s *Extravagant Shepherd*, they have some fun with the madwoman, but also try to nurse her back to health by sharing stories. Most of these consist of racy gossip about their aristocratic acquaintances, a scandalous series of sexcapades and bedroom farces, assignations and adulteries, playfully narrated in a flirty manner. It’s all repartee, double entendres, divertissements, and other French-derived words. Raillery. Ripostes. Persiflage.

The silly premise is just an excuse for Subligny to demonstrate a new mode of fiction: sleek, sophisticated, and sexy. Fiction for adults, not for 14-year-old girls. Like the novels of Segrais, Scarron, and Furetière, *The Mock Clelia* is a repudiation of the old-fashion *roman héroïque*, an attractive alternative that, as Sorel urged long ago, uses French names and contemporary settings. There are embedded “novellas” in imitation of those in the heroic romances, dramatizing “the various transmutations of love” (210), but most of them are brief and more like conversations: the other characters will frequently interrupt the narrator to ask a question or respond to some aspect, like friends listening to a story over drinks. The dialogue is natural; they use a conversational tone, even imitate a foreign accent or a stutter. (When Juliette has one of her fits and begins speaking as Clelia, the tone is comically elevated.) The ladies throw around the word “slut” pretty freely—in reference to mischievous chambermaids, not each other—and dish stories as risqué as the men’s. As these bon vivants swap tales, they self-consciously construct a novel of their own, commenting on its progress from time to time and enjoying themselves immensely.

Drollery. Bon mots. Coquetry.

The Mock Clelia rejects the ideals and values of the heroic romances as well as their aesthetics. Near the beginning of one of Velzer's stories, the Dutchwoman (sounding like Furetière's narrator) says of her troubled protagonist, "Any other but I might have a fair occasion here to speak of the tears she shed before she could bring herself to that resolution, and of the conflict that passed between her virtue and love, but that I leave to some Mademoiselle de Scudéry. . . ." " 'Consider a little,' said Madam de Moulionne, 'how that lady tells her story, and speaks of virtue in a jocose way!' " (330–31). Living up to their stereotypes, the rakish Frenchmen in this novel pursue sex at every opportunity and meet little resistance from the equally lusty women, who are less concerned with their "virtue" than with hoodwinking their husbands or fathers.[57] Some stories verge on the pornographic, held back only by the narrator's recourse to double entendres; in one, a nobleman cuts a hole in the wall of a young wife's bedroom and plasters over it with a board to facilitate his coming and going, which leads the narrator to wink about the new bride's "hole": " 'The husband had a hundred times viewed all his wife's chamber and believed that the new piece was the former plaster, because the wall was new; and nobody could ever have imagined that the hole which was shut so close could open and shut when one had a mind. You laugh, fair ladies,' said he interrupting himself, 'and perhaps think that I forge a story?' 'Go on,' said they, 'if the thing be not true, it is at least well invented . . .' " (294).

Storytelling among these sophisticates is slick with sexual innuendo; when Montal offers to tell another story, "Mademoiselle de Barbesieux challenged the Chevalier's prowess, which he immediately performed, addressing his discourse to her in these terms" (284). As they tell their sexy stories, they often exchange knowing looks and flirt shamelessly. In the one about a tall, stuttering redhead who takes poetry lessons from a short gallant, versifying quickly becomes a metaphor for sex. After two years of studying under him, "She hatched a very natural and gallant work; but some considerations made her look upon the piece as a thing misbecoming a maid who made it a point of honour to hate all kind of gallantry. She stifled the work and the desire she might have had to publish it, at one and the same time" (360).[58] After suppressing the result of her "studies," we're told tongue in cheek that "she had an itching desire to try the art of some others.

A man of great quality passing that way to go to his government seemed to her by his looks to be a good poet. She imagined that his quality must needs suggest to him more lofty thoughts than those of Monsieur de Lusigny," her former tutor (361). Teasingly literalizing the storytelling/lovemaking trope, Subligny ends the novel by putting the fair Breton and the saucy Hollandaise in bed together, ostensibly so that Kermas can conclude a story begun earlier. "Shortly after their discourse ended, or at least for reasons that I know," he snickers, "I must make them conclude here" (395).

Badinage. Canards. Panache.

The final page of *The Mock Clelia* is a letdown; as though drained, Subligny briefly notes that "Clelia" was rescued by her Aronces, recovered from her bibliomania, and got married. "The ladies de Kermas, Barbesieux, and Velzers in time had their contentment also, and the gentlemen themselves came to see a pleasant period put to their adventures" (396), he concludes limply. But until that kiss-off, *The Mock Clelia* completely fulfills the author's promise (made in the preface) to present a "new way of writing": fresh, conversational, and worldly, a blessed relief from the ponderous prudery of the heroic romances. (The same tone would be struck 10 years later in Beer's *German Winter Nights*.) The novel resembles a flirty ballet, like Poulenc's *Les Biches*, and it's a shame that it is remembered today, if at all, only as the inspiration for another novel with a similar premise, Charlotte Lennox's *Female Quixote*.

A Brief Digression on Pornography

I write above that *The Mock Clelia* occasionally "verges on the pornographic." There were of course some novels that wallowed in the pornographic at this time, in France and elsewhere, but I'll be ignoring most of them. Yes, they present an alternative to mainstream fiction and are transgressive in their sexual explicitness, but most pornography is as formulaic and clichéd as commercial fiction. Same with her classy cousin, erotica. It's not subject matter that makes a novel literature, alternative or otherwise, but innovative form and/or language. For example, I have in my library—I don't know how it got there, Mom, I swear!—an old paperback copy of *The School of Venus* (*L'Escole des filles*) by Millot and L'Ange, first published in Paris in the summer of 1655. Taking its form from Aretino's *Dialogues*, it consists mainly of

two conversations between an older teen named Susanne and a 16-year-old virgin named Franchon. In the first, Susanne explains the mechanics of sex to her friend and encourages her to try them out on a randy suitor named Robinet; in the second, Franchon reports back with an enthusiastic account of their several encounters, so Susanne gives her student further lessons (including some tips on birth control).[59] The short novel is basically a sex manual in fictional form, a plea for sex education for sheltered girls, and is surprising only for its wholesomeness and *joie de vivre*. The panting authors pretend it's intended for girls, but it's obviously written for male readers and represents a fantasy of how we wish women would talk. Its literary value is slim to none. Because *The School of Venus* resembles a sex manual, erotic bibliographer Gershon Legman felt "the first erotic work in French actually in the novel form" was *Le Rut, ou la pudeur éteinte* (Rutting, or Modesty Discarded, 1676) by Pierre-Corneille Blessebois (1646?–1700), the "Casanova of the 17th Century" (91). Gershon says this work was quickly translated into English, but I haven't located a copy, which is perhaps just as well. Jean Barrin's notorious *Venus in the Cloister* (*Venus dans le cloître*, 1683) has even less of a story than *The School of Venus*: one day 20-year-old Sister Angelica catches 16-year-old Sister Agnes masturbating in her cell, and over the course of three dialogues (expanded to five in the English translation) she reassures the wayward nun that *all* monastics and religious orders do it—the monks call it "The Battle of Five to One"—and goes on to shares a number of lubricious stories to prove her point, punctuating her points with kisses. *Venus in the Cloister* is essentially a ribald satire on Catholicism and monasticism, and an excuse to eroticize religious discipline. While it may be of some value to historians of erotica because of the reading lists the scissor sisters share, it's of little interest to historians of the novel except as a primitive ancestor of Diderot's *Nun* and Sade's *Justine.* Porn has its uses, and abuses, but it's at the sticky entertainment end of the literary spectrum, so unless a pornographic novel exhibits especially seductive form or cunning linguistics, I'll be resisting its sleazy charms.

In 1670, a mysterious novel was published in Paris that would hardly be worth mentioning except that it inspired a number of later writers. *Le Comte de Gabalis* is a short novel by Nicolas de Montfaucon de Villars (1635–73), an urbane, erudite priest who apparently wanted to poke fun at the growing number of Rosicrucians and Freemasons. Hearing that the count has just died, the narrator dismisses rumors that he was killed by an avenging angel for revealing occult secrets, and recounts a visit Gabalis once paid him. Over the course of five conversations, the mystic informed him of the existence of elemental beings—sylphs (representing air), nymphs (water), salamanders (fire), and gnomes (earth)—who have human form but lack a soul. In order to qualify for eternal life, they need to mate with a human, and Gabalis encourages the narrator to give up human women in favor of these soulless creatures, for conjoining with them will aid him in his spiritual evolution "from darkness into light, from knowledge into understanding, and from understanding into Wisdom Found which is the consciousness of the Universal Mind."[60] There's a certain amount of bantering back and forth—the narrator is skeptical, the count taunts him for his skepticism—and mixed in with all the theological/mythological material are many sexual innuendos hinting that the mysterious conjunction of humans with elementals is a precursor of the Tantric sex magic embraced by various cults in Europe and America beginning in the 19th century.[61] Half the time, Gabalis sounds like he's recommending a libertine lifestyle involving mistresses of various temperaments (ethereal, fiery, wet 'n' wild, earthy) instead of a wife, and it's difficult to take him seriously when he uses anecdotes like the following to illustrate his mystic teachings: "A certain Philosopher, with whom a Nymph was engaged in an intrigue of immortality, was so disloyal as to love a [mortal] woman. As he sat at dinner with his new paramour and some friends, there appeared in the air the most beautiful leg in the world. The invisible sweetheart greatly desired to show herself to the friends of her faithless lover, that they might judge how wrong he was in preferring a woman to her. Afterward the indignant Nymph killed him on the spot" (137).[62] On the last page of the novel, the narrator tips his hand by expressing the hope his readers will "not take it amiss that I amuse myself at the expense of fools," nor suspect him "of seeking to give credit to the Occult Sciences under the pretence of

ridiculing them . . .” (201). Many took it seriously: it was a hit in Paris, was translated into English twice a decade later—and reprinted in 1714 after Pope referred to it in a footnote to “The Rape of the Lock”—and to this day it is revered as a sacred text by some, rather than appreciated for what it surely is: a learned, occasionally amusing satire on occultism, perhaps a fairy tale for the “sylphs” and “nymphs” of the Parisian salons where the suave Abbé de Villars was always welcome.

Instead of continuing along Sorel’s way, most French novelists took a shortcut through d’Urfé’s way. They continued to write historical novels, but much shorter ones and set closer to their own time, and began blurring the distinctions between history, fiction, and memoir. *Voilà: la nouvelle historique*. And by “they” I mean Frenchwomen, who dominated the genre for decades.[63] One of the earliest examples is a jewel of a novella entitled *The Princess de Montpensier*, published anonymously in 1662 but written by Madeleine de Scudéry’s young friend Marie-Madeleine de Lafayette (1634–93), perhaps with some help by her former tutor Gilles Ménage, a scholar and poet (and another friend of Scudéry). Set not in ancient times but a mere century earlier—like a novelist today setting a romantic story during World War I—the novella’s alignment of the affairs of the heart with the affairs of the nation is announced in its clever opening sentence: “In the reign of Charles IX [1560–74], when France was torn apart by civil war, Love continued to conduct his affairs amid the disorder and to cause many disorders in his own kingdom.”[64] Love’s victim is a beautiful young heiress who at age 13 falls for the young Duc de Guise, who returns her affections; for political reasons, however, she’s married three years later to the Prince of Montpensier, and dutifully tries to forget her first love. But de Guise can’t forget her, and is joined by others who fall in love with the young beauty: first, Montpensier’s close friend, the Comte de Chabannes, who chaperons her during the prince’s many absences; and later, the Duc d’Anjou, the future King Henri III. Lafayette exquisitely tracks the jealous tension that develops between the prince and the two dukes, as well as Chabannes’s unrequited love, while the princess remains cool, calm, and collected. But when she learns de Guise has become engaged, she revives

her earlier affection for him, exhibiting that irritating tendency of women to ignore a guy until another woman takes an interest in him. Slipping off her pedestal of virtue, she recklessly agrees to an assignation with de Guise, aided by heartbroken but devoted Chabannes, which is interrupted by the astounded prince (though before anything actually happens). She faints, and the men scatter, losing themselves in the country's sectarian violence. (The Saint Bartholomew's Massacre of August 1572 occurs during the novella.) Further shocked by news of Chabannes's death and de Guise's engagement to yet another woman, not to mention "the pain of having lost the esteem of her husband" (187), the Princess of Montpensier withers and dies.

Though the tale is tragic, there is a *je-ne-sais-quoi* quality about it, a certain aesthetic distance between the tale and its teller that occasionally reveals a slight smile from her, an arched eyebrow. It's the wry asides —"being in love, and thus self-interested . . ." (159); "We are very weak when we are in love" (179); "Things are not at all as they appear" (185)— and the novella's too-pat exit line: "she was one of the most beautiful princesses in the world, and would doubtless have been the happiest, if virtue and prudence had guarded her actions" (188). It's the deft imagery, as when Chabannes suggests the princess can let d'Anjou sneak in by lowering "the little drawbridge" connecting her room to the garden – more elegant than Subligny's "hole" but signifying as much. Most of all it's the self-consciousness about the old genre Lafayette was renovating. When the dukes de Guise and d'Anjou accidentally come upon the princess in a boat near her estate, "They thought it was something out of a romance" (164), and a few pages later Chabannes "foresaw all too easily that this first chapter of the romance would not lack a sequel" (166). Subsequent events are called "adventures." With her "supernatural" beauty, the princess does indeed seem to have stepped out of a *roman héroïque* at first, but as she grows up and the narrative progresses, they both develop enough psychological depth to indicate we're not in Forez anymore. The historical details are mostly accurate and, as the opening line promised, they metaphorically link personal turmoil with civil turmoil caused by France's religious wars; at the same time, Lafayette could be describing the latest scandal from court. (She had been one of Queen Anne's maids of honor and continued to mingle with the aristocracy.) *The Princess de Montpensier* is a

superbly poised debut, deservedly became very popular, and promised great things from its 28-year-old author.

Seven years later, Lafayette published her first full-length novel (though under 200 pages), a sophisticated dramatization of epistemology that is strikingly modern in its psychological acumen. But instead of taking one step closer to the psychological novel that would make her famous, she took a sidestep, if not a step backward, with *Zayde: A Spanish Romance* (*Zayde, histoire espagnole*, 1669), as though she wanted to add her dainty foot to those of Scarron and Furetière kicking the *roman héroïque* to the curb. Once again, Lafayette seems to have worked with an older male collaborator, in this case the duke de La Rochefoucauld (1613–80), whose famous *Maxims* appeared in 1664. *Zayde* certainly suggests Lafayette shared his sour view that most people display too much self-interest and not enough self-knowledge.[65]

The novel is set in the early 10th century, mostly in Spain but with a long flashback set in Cyprus, and though Lafayette researched the era, there isn't enough material to provide the kind of history lesson Scudéry's novels do. Indeed, there are anachronisms aplenty, enough to suggest Lafayette was more interested in dealing with contemporary philosophical dilemmas than in exploring medieval Moorish–Spanish relations. It's unclear, then, why she decided to hitch her modern concerns to an old horse like the romance. In the introduction to his excellent translation, Nicholas Paige suggests, "Lafayette set out to subvert the genre from the inside: her work is both a romance and a pastiche of romance" (13), perhaps in an effort to wean her audience away from that readerly form and prepare them for more writerly works. Paige goes on to note, "Lafayette treated her reader to an enigmatic *in medias res* beginning, and to a picture-perfect wedding finale—but in between, nothing is quite what one would expect" (16).

The main characters in *Zayde* are shrouded in uncertainty, and the novel explores the tendency of people to shrug off such shrouds by jumping to conclusions, usually based on appearances that turn out to be deceptive, and largely from their instinct to believe what they want to believe. The reader shares their uncertainty at first. We're uncertain why Consalve, the son of a count, has fled the court of Leon for a secluded spot on the coast of Catalonia, or why another nobleman named Alphonse left Navarre under

similar vague circumstances for the same hideaway five years earlier. Uncertainly doubles after they rescue the survivors of a shipwreck, two beautiful ladies who speak an unknown language. Consalve falls in love with the younger—this is our Zayde—and immediately begins spinning a crazy story in his head about a romantic rival, then decides to seek him out and "kill her lover before her very eyes" (90). While the ladies wait for another ship to rescue them, Consalve and Alphonse compete to see who's sadder by comparing backstories, dismal accounts of misplaced trust and betrayal (Consalve) and self-inflicted jealousy (Alphonse) that are weak in action but strong on psychology. Later we learn that Zayde was making assumptions about her sad rescuer that are as imaginary as Consalve's about her. Even after they learn each other's language and are reunited later in the novel, the prospect of their marriage seems doomed by misassumptions about the religious objections of Zayde's father (which prove illusory) and about the subject of a portrait that resembles Consalve but in Arab dress to whom Zayde has committed herself, aided by an astrologer's prediction. Turns out the artist of the portrait simply liked Arab dress and clothed all his subjects in it, and that she misinterpreted the astrologer. Instead of providing the foregone conclusions of heroic romances, Lafayette keeps readers guessing until the very end, teaching them to mistrust the claims of confident protagonists (hitherto fairly trustworthy in fiction) and providing considerably more suspense than usual in a genre known for its predictability.

The almost psychopathic displays of jealousy, self-loathing, and misanthropy by Consalve and Alphonse are offset by the amorous adventures of an Arab prince named Alamir, whose attempts to woo upright Zayde after a series of Muslim pushovers add some comic relief to the somber novel. (Pursuing one girl entails hiding out in a ladies' bathhouse and disguising himself as a woman in a mosque.) But most of *Zayde* focuses with great psychological perception on the inner workings of jealousy: the tendency to spin damning scenarios out of shreds of "evidence," to project one's own fears and suspicions on others, to rush to judgment rather than suspend it until one can gather and evaluate the facts, and in general the egotistic tendency to privilege subjectivity over objectivity. Lafayette doesn't resort to moralizing or condemning her

deluded protagonists; she lets the facts, gradually revealed, speak for themselves.

But *Zayde*'s psychological sophistication is at odds with the clunky machinery of its *roman héroïque* form. There are shipwrecks, prophecies, mistaken identities, falling in love with a portrait, fickle Fortune, extraordinary coincidences, disguises, embedded *histoires* with the inevitable violations of point-of-view (*no* French novelist gets that right), and stereotypical characters described in superlative terms: every woman is beautiful and charming, every man generous and brave, and even a minor character "was one of the few men on earth who had as much merit as gracefulness" (100). Lafayette does make some improvements to her models: her embedded stories flow organically in and out of the main narrative; she avoids theatrical extravaganzas (earthquakes, burning cities, unbelievable physical feats); and she reinforces her high-level concern with epistemology at the lexical level by reiterating words with "know" (*connaître*) at their root (knowing, knowledge, unknown, etc.), often in opposition to "imagine." Lafayette downplays the weddings with which romances always conclude: Zayde's shipwreck companion, Felime, dies of unrequited love before the end, a departure from the norm; and even though Consalve and Zayde do marry, the author is loudly silent on whether they lived happily ever after. "The happy ending, therefore," Anne Green suggests, "must be seen as an ironic one. There is nothing to suggest that the jealousy, anguish and despair that have arisen from the inability of Zaïde and Consalve to communicate with one another will suddenly end with their marriage" (54). And of course the fact that *Zayde* is a fraction of the length of the average *roman héroïque* makes for a tauter, more unified work. It's a fine novel, but could have been finer if Lafayette had left behind the baggage of the romances she grew up on. DeJean feels "in *Zayde*, Lafayette builds her own funerary monument to the fiction that had dominated the literary horizon during her reign as a young *précieuse*" (*Tender Geographies*, 65), but I feel her talents would have been better spent imagining fiction's future rather than mourning its past.

She might have taken a cue from a younger woman writer causing a stir in Paris at the time, Marie-Catherine Desjardins, better known by her pseudonym Madame de Villedieu (1640?–83). In 1661, barely out of her teens, she published the first volume of a *roman héroïque* entitled

Alcidamie, a knockoff of Gomberville's *Polexander*, which she then abandoned, perhaps because she realized the market for such fare was shrinking, and/or because of pressure from the family whose scandalous history provides the main plot. Or, as Bruce Morrissette suggests, Villedieu "probably sensed that her own talents hardly appeared at their best in such an imitative work" (52). "Feeling her way toward the forms best suited to her temperament," as he goes on to say—a passionate, bohemian temperament—she announced a new genre in the subtitle of her *Lisandre: nouvelle galante* (1663), the first of many novellas she published over the next dozen years. In contrast to the idealistic historic romances, these gallant novellas are worldly and modern, a shiny reflection of love *à la mode* during the reign of the Sun King. She also tried a pastoral (*Carmante*, 1668) and novellas purporting to reveal the love lives of ancient figures.[66] But from 1664 onward she worked away at something more suitable to her wild talents, resulting in an innovative fiction that her translator describes by what it is not: "neither an autobiography, nor a novel, nor memoirs, nor an epistolary novel, but a text that has something of all those genres" (Introduction, 13). Nor is it a picaresque, a *nouvelle galante*, a legal novel, a confession, nor lesbian erotica, though it has elements of those too. Whatever it is, it's quite a show.

Published anonymously, *Memoirs of the Life of Henriette-Sylvie de Molière* (1672–74) consists of six long letters addressed to someone identified only as Madame or Your Highness, the same format as *Lazarillo of Tormes* and a similar attempt to justify one's life to a superior. Subject to years of scandalous rumors, Sylvie wants to set the record straight with a true account of her admittedly unconventional life in order to earn Madame's sympathy—and to titillate her along the way. After a prefatory "Fragment of a Letter" that could be by Sylvie or Villedieu herself, already blurring the distinction between fact and fiction, Sylvie explains that she was born an orphan, and though she suspects an aristocratic father, her parentage is never established, which separates her from the orphans of romance novels who invariably turn out to be noble. Throughout, Villedieu both adopts and subverts the conventions of romantic fiction; Sylvie's suspicion of a noble heritage is part of her tongue-in-cheek conception of herself as like "some fiction heroine" (26), the first of many playful

references to the similarity between her "true" memoir and the novel, further blurring its status. Some readers and early critics did indeed regard the *Memoir* as an autobiography by "the George Sand of her time," as one of them called her, but Morrissette insists that, "though faint suggestions of Mlle Desjardins' own life may be discerned in the novel, it cannot be regarded as intentionally autobiographical: neither the characters, their motives, not their actions have any counterpart in the real life of its author" (141).

Sylvie is raised by peasants and at age five catches the eye of a passing nobleman who gets his financier, a man named Molière (a common name at the time and not necessarily a reference to the playwright, whom Villedieu knew), to adopt her. While still a tween, she goes out hunting with Molière in the forest, where he tries to rape her; no cowering victim, Sylvie shoots him twice and escapes on horseback. Eat lead, patriarchal hegemony! She is offered the protection of the Marquis de Birague, who is having an affair with her foster mother, but he too takes a carnal interest in the beautiful girl. (Sylvie will spend the rest of the novel dodging dicks like these—every man she meets wants to stick it to her—and she understandably develops a loathing for men.) After the first of many retreats in a convent, she comes under the protection of the widowed sister of the abbess of her convent, Madame d'Englesac, and falls in love with her son, and there all her troubles multiply: much of the rest of the novel concerns her on-and-off relations with the son, persecution by the mother and by Birague (who hopes to make her his someday), and related events that make her appear to the scandalized world as a scheming adventuress—the opinion many contemporaries held of Villedieu herself. She disgusted Tallemant, for example, though he coarsely admitted that others admired her literary talent: "They placed her above Mlle de Scudéry and all the rest of the bitches."[67]

Villedieu's *Memoirs* shares a major theme with Lafayette's *Zayde*: Felime warns Alamir of rumors "formed on the basis of relatively plausible appearances; but I assure you nonetheless that these appearances are misleading" (168). And even more than Lafayette, she pours scorn on those who jump to conclusions and spread rumors based on appearances. But Villedieu takes a lighter approach to the theme; while clearing herself of the

malicious gossip that dogs her, Sylvie plays a teasing game with her audience, ostensibly Madame but actually the readers of her novel, a special treat for those who have always wanted to be addressed as Your Highness. (You know who you are.) While insisting she's a good girl, she focuses on the many times her "free and playful manner" (112) gets her into hot water, leading us time and again right to the lip of a sexual encounter before skipping away leaving hints and innuendo. "(How impudent I am, to recount all that to Your Highness!)" she winks parenthetically (70). She especially likes to hint at lesbian possibilities, which are frequent because Sylvie often disguises herself as a man—blurring the nature of her sex as she does the genre of her text—and which seems calculated to appeal to Madame's bent. Though she does this to escape difficulties, the coquette can't resist having fun with some of the ladies she meets while in drag, some of whom call her bluff. (Nor is she the only one: during her many adventures she meets other women dressed as men, and in one instance switches clothes with a young man, who seems a little *too* eager to wear ladies' clothes.)

While all this is titillating, there's some desperation on the narrator's part to keep the reader entertained; during the second half of the novel especially, when Sylvie is being sued by various parties, mocked in novels written about her, betrayed by the man she loves, and losing control over her increasingly chaotic life, she will reluctantly interrupt her narrative to recount a facetious anecdote for Madame's benefit, even apologizing for getting too serious. For example, after learning of the death of a friend and describing its impact on her, Sylvie writes, "However, I may be spending too much time on a matter that is not amusing and, to provide amusement I must return to the funny adventures that were subsequently not in short supply" (93). The show must go on. At the end of a few letters, Sylvie tells us she needs to rest and "think about what I still have to say" (123) to remind us this novel isn't writing itself, that behind it is a woman working hard for the money. Unlike other women writers of her time, Villedieu supported herself by her pen, but that meant catering to her readers' perceived tastes and fending off their curiosity about her private life, while taking care not to alienate them (something that didn't concern Furetière in his reader-baiting *Bourgeois Romance*). *Memoirs* is a fascinating enactment

of the author–reader relationship, one of the first to hint at the small print in that devil's bargain.

Though her smile may be a little forced, and though she may very well be playing us, Sylvie is a thoroughly engaging narrator, and a new type of woman in French fiction. Did I mention she shoots and kills the first man who lays a finger on her? No one is going to abduct *this* heroine. Though she gives in to pressure at age 16 to marry an old man (who dies a few years later, and whose legacy is one of her many legal problems), she is remarkably independent, proactive, and resourceful. She travels all over France and the Netherlands to pursue her lover, fights the legal battles others wage against her—a suitably modern counterpart to the military battles of the *roman héroïque*—and never compromises. She's certainly not a blind adherent to old-fashioned virtue; sounding more like a swinging chick of the 1960s than one from the 1660s, she boldly states, "frankly I've never been able to accept some forms of jealousy: those that seem to me too centered on the physical. The assurance of an undivided heart has always been enough for me, and always will be. Everyone has his or her own way of loving; I believe myself to be more refined, by loving in such a way, than those who profess refinement" (69). She goes on to say "the greatest misfortune that can strike a lady is . . . to be unable to love two men at the same time" (79), and perhaps a few women as well. She is consistently amusing, especially in her metafictional asides about being the heroine of a novel, she's self-deprecating in a way utterly foreign to the humorless heroines of earlier French novels, and she laughs out loud at gallant attempts to woo her. Her language is refreshingly colloquial, and the entire novel is seductively realistic as she name-drops actual celebrities and famous figures of the day, provides dates and datable events—the novel takes place between 1647 and 1672—and in one hyperrealistic instance Sylvie rents a carriage from a certain Blavet, who, scholars have discovered, is the name of a real "merchant who rented coaches and chaises" at the time (103 n9). This beguiling work represents a novel approach to fiction, as well as to life, and deserves to be better known.

Villedieu was right behind Lafayette in formulating the newfangled genre of the *nouvelle historïque*, and in 1675 published a bitter example that some believe influenced the latter's *Princess de Clèves.* As though Sylvie, fed up with love, decided to turn historian and write a diatribe against it, *The*

Disorders of Love (*Les Désordres de l'amour*, 1675) exposes the baleful role desire played in the civil/religious wars of the late 16th century. It consists of three linked novellas—the book is divided into four parts, but the third and fourth form a continuous narrative—occasionally punctuated by poetic "maxims" that reiterate the novel's thesis: "Misfortunes have always and do always accompany love and its mania" (Maxim 3, 38). Set a few years after the events of Lafayette's *Princess de Montpensier* and featuring many of the same characters, part 1 is dominated by a clever coquette named Charlotte de Sauve, "who juggled five or six affairs simultaneously" (36). Since her suitors are powerful people, her politically calculated flirtations create rivalries and tensions that erupt into warfare. In part 2, very reminiscent of Lafayette's first novella and the part that allegedly influenced *The Princess de Clèves*, a young woman dutifully marries an older marquis, but soon becomes miserable because, she confesses to him, she's always been in love with the marquis's nephew. Her husband gallantly offers to divorce her to allow her to follow her heart, and even conveniently dies, but her second marriage to the nephew soon falls apart due to boredom and jealousy and leads to further civil disorders. The third and longest novella features a young nobleman who becomes the obsession of one woman he doesn't really love, and the object of scorn by the one he does, a conflict that eventually drives him to seek death in battle. Covering the period from 1574 to 1590, *The Disorders of Love* shows how the personal becomes the political when love's victims are in positions of power.

The plots are much more intricate than I've indicated, and hue closely to Villedieu's sources—so closely that the famous philosopher and critic Pierre Bayle, who has an entry on Villedieu in his *Historical and Critical Dictionary* (1697), chastised her for confusing readers by blurring the line between history and fiction. But she saw fiction as a means to deepen our understanding of history, not falsify it for entertainment purposes, by going behind the scenes and dramatizing the private motivations behind public events. Anticipating Dumas's advice *Cherchez la femme*, she looks for the women—often ignored or downplayed by historians—who helped influence history via their romantic entanglements with the "great men" of history, and she literally gives voice to these silenced women by inventing dialogue for them. Villedieu doesn't idealize these women (as Saint-Réal did with

Don Carlos); the novel isn't a feminist rehabilitation of women unfairly vilified by male historians, for many of her females are indeed haughty, egotistic schemers. She wants to show that they too are subject to love's "mania" and, while under its influence, can cause just as much damage as men in the public sector.

As fictionalized history, *The Disorders of Love* is certainly illuminating, though Villedieu inhibits her creativity by tethering herself so closely to the historical record. The novelist in her is unleashed only when her characters bewail the power love has over them, as in the wife's confessional scene in part 2, and especially in the scenes in the last part featuring the unrequited lover Madame de Maugiron, one of the novel's few fictitious characters. Willing to be burned at the stake of love, she insists she will always love her man even after he coldly rejects her: " 'Be even more cruel still!' interrupted Madame de Maugiron, 'and say that you hate me now more than you ever did love me. I shall love you no less for it. My fatal passion needs no encouragement nor any hope to subsist. For a long time now, it seems to have become even more intense without either. You owe me no gratitude for it; this is not a voluntary love' " (110). Vows of eternal love are common enough in romantic fiction, but there is a desperate, masochistic intensity here that is new, as is Villedieu's clinical analysis of her disorder: "Unfortunately, it is far easier to become infected with love's germs than it is to be cured of the malady. She continued to love him in spite of his efforts" to dissuade her (110). Nor is she ever rewarded for her fidelity, as she would have been in a Scudéry novel; on the penultimate page, we're told merely that "she succumbed finally to a lingering illness" (120). The novel ends with Villedieu's bitter view of love: "If, on the one hand, one experiences it only slightly [like the characters in part 1], it is an inexhaustible source of perfidy and treason; and if, on the other hand, one embarks upon its path in good faith [like the characters in the other parts], it leads to the very depths of disorder and despair" (120). There is no third option. Villedieu elevates her own disappointment in love to a universal principle, and calls upon history to validate it.

The Disorders of Love certainly defends its thesis, and demonstrates remarkable insights into the psychology of love, but Villedieu doesn't trust her material enough to let it speak for itself. Too often the historian in her

interjects didactic comments on the lessons the novelist in her has provided. For example, part 2 ends thus:

> If, by the examples provided in this first and second volumes [i.e., parts], I have proven, as I believe that I have, that love is the force behind all other human passions and that it can not be combatted too soon since its smallest sparks produce deadly fires, I hope to provide equally convincing evidence that not only does it activate our other passions but also that it deserves often all of the blame directed towards these passions. I hope to prove equally that it pushes us to the edges of despair and that the most beautiful works of nature and art depend often on a moment of its caprice and its fury. I am sure that at this point more than one reader is saying, somewhat ironically, that I have not always spoken in this manner. That is precisely why I am now justified in speaking so negatively. And, finally, it is because I have provided irrefutable proof that I am authorized to paint love with such dark colors. (70–71)

It's understandable that an author notorious for her tales of gallantry would want to justify this about-face, but such passages dilute the dark colors of her novel. Villedieu the novelist does a good enough job that we don't need Villedieu the historian to point the moral; the unusual poetic maxims she inserts from time to time fill that function. Nonetheless, *The Disorders of Love* exemplifies why the *nouvelle historique* is a welcome addition to the novel family: while earlier romances concluded with a problem-solving marriage, these newer novels explored what happens after the honeymoon is over. We leave behind the relatively simple concerns of the young adults of the *roman héroïque* for the more complex difficulties married adults face, which encouraged novelists to add more psychological depth to their characters. And by drawing upon recent, familiar history, they gave greater verisimilitude to their fictions and could even claim (as Villedieu does) that they are equal if not superior to historians in enabling readers to understand the past, and specifically the roles women played in shaping that past.

If Mme de Lafayette did indeed read Mme de Villedieu's novel, she might have decided to step up her game and show her who was the real queen bee of French fiction. More likely (and less silly), by 1675 she was already writing the novel that would be published, anonymously but with much

fanfare, in March 1678 as *The Princess de Clèves* (pronounced "klev"), without doubt the finest example of the *nouvelle historique* and the one that shows the greatest psychological depth. It is regularly described as France's (even the world's) first "modern" novel; given its 16th-century setting and occasional fairytale elements, I suspect most readers today would find a more modern sensibility in Villedieu's *Memoirs*, Scarron's and Furetière's subversive novels, or even Cyrano's *Other World*. Some would find it easier to identify with the gossip girls and playboys in *The Mock Clelia* than with Lafayette's kings and courtiers. But to a greater degree than any of those works, *The Princess de Clèves* displays what cultural historian Peter Gay identifies as the two quintessential qualities of modernism: "committing calculated offenses against conventionality" and "the exploration of subjective experience."[68] It is the latter quality especially that distinguishes Lafayette's novel from most of its predecessors and that set the agenda for most modern fiction. The former quality is less obvious and is what, along with the novel's subtle artistry, makes it a revolutionary masterpiece.

The basic plot is similar enough to that of *The Princess de Montpensier* to suggest Lafayette deliberately set out to rewrite and improve upon her earlier work, as Joyce did with *Stephen Hero* and Proust with *Jean Santeuil*. Again, she is said to have been assisted by Segrais and especially by La Rochefoucauld, whose dim view of love darkens the novel. ("What is least often found in love affairs is love," he maxims.[69]) Critic Erica Harth provides a convenient summary:

> *La Princesse de Clèves* is the story of a young wife's love for a man who is not her husband. When she was married at sixteen to the Prince de Clèves, Mlle de Chartres did not even know enough to realize that she did not love her husband. Thus when she meets the most sought-after man at court, the Duc de Nemours, she is destined for unhappiness. Struggling to live up to the lessons in virtue that her mother gave her, she feels so guilty about a love expressed only in her own mind or through involuntary glances and subtle innuendoes that she confesses her passion for Nemours [without naming him] to her husband. This scene takes place at their country home in Coulommiers. Nemours, who stalks her relentlessly, just happens to be nearby and overhears the conversation.

> Through a subsequent series of misunderstandings, Clèves becomes unbearably jealous and finally dies. Free at last to marry Nemours, who presses her insistently to do so, she chooses instead to enter a convent, where she ends her days.[70]

Harth doesn't mention that the novel is set in the final year of the reign of Henri II (i.e., 1558–59), for that's the least important aspect of the novel. Though the princess and her mother are the only fictitious characters, and though Lafayette closely follows the historical record—deliberately highlighting the power women held at court—she's less interested in giving a history lesson than in exploring ethical issues that were as relevant in her own time as in the past. Lafayette's recurring theme is the deceptiveness of appearances, and how characters either participate in or challenge those deceptions, and appearances were just as deceiving in the court of Louis XIV as that of Henri II.

The seductive magnificence of appearances is the focus of the novel's opening pages, and the queen's "profound capacity for dissimulation" (3) is shared by the characters Lafayette introduces one by one (with ironic praise in retrospect), culminating in the ladykiller Nemours, whose own mastery of dissimulation keeps everyone guessing which of his many mistresses he really loves. Beneath the glittering appearances of noble aristocrats and beautiful ladies, Lafayette gradually uncovers a snakepit of personal ambition, rivalry, jealousy, and treachery: "Ambition and love affairs were the life-blood of the court, absorbing the attention of men and women alike. There were countless interests at stake, countless different factions, and women played such a central part in them that love was always entangled with politics and politics with love. No one was tranquil or indifferent; all thoughts were on seeking advancement, gaining favour, helping, or harming; boredom and idleness were unknown, everyone was kept busy by pleasure or intrigue" (14). Into this hectic world steps Mlle de Chartres, carefully raised by a mother who tried to teach her to see through appearances; she disagreed with those mothers who keep their daughters in the dark about the nature of the world, who "avoid speaking about amorous entanglements in front of young girls in order to preserve them from contamination. Mme de Chartres believed the opposite. She often gave her

daughter descriptions of love; she impressed on her how attractive it can be in order to convince her more easily of what she said about its dangers; she spoke to her of men's insincerity, of their deceptions and infidelity . . ." (9–10).

Mademoiselle's "youthful appearance" is enough to capture the heart of Clèves. Though they barely know each other and scarcely exchange a word —Lafayette cunningly keeps the girl silent for the first 20 pages—she follows her mother's advice and marries him, even though "she felt no particular attraction for his person" (20) and never does develop any passion for him, to his immense disappointment. After "the wedding took place" (21)—Lafayette's passive dismissal of the event speaks volumes—the new Madame de Clèves settles into dutiful-wife mode and remains there, even after she notices Nemours's interest in her and notes—to her great surprise and embarrassment—her own interest in him. It's that sense of duty that compels her to confess her attraction to Nemours to her husband. (And that's all it is, attraction: there are no secret meetings, passionate conversations, or stolen kisses. It's as chaste as a Scudéry novel.) Knowing she's about to do something unheard-of, she tells her husband, "I will make you a confession which no woman has ever made to her husband" (95), and when word gets out (thanks to eavesdropping Nemours), people are astonished at "the extraordinary behavior of the woman who had confessed to her husband her passion for another man" (105). They are astonished because any other woman would have concealed her feelings, or would have enjoyed the fling: Lafayette has already shown this is a society where extramarital affairs were normal and usually open secrets. What makes the princess's act extraordinary is her calculated "modernist" offense against conventionality: indignant at the idea of being as secretive and hypocritical as everyone else, she tells her husband, "It was not weakness that made me confess: it needs more courage to admit such a truth than to seek to hide it" (96). She defies convention again when she refuses to marry Nemours after her husband's death, and then offends conventionality a final time by throwing it all away and joining a convent, preferring "peace of mind" over riches, status, and power. Like Bartleby the scrivener, she prefers not to participate in normal life.

Lafayette's readers were shocked, as one newspaper learned when it conducted a poll shortly after the novel appeared. "The overwhelming

majority of the responses, most of which came from the provinces, condemned the princess's behavior, often, ironically in retrospect, for having destroyed 'domestic repose.' "[71] While the Princess of Clèves's unexamined sense of decorum and her retreat to a nunnery (a secular getaway, not a religious calling) may not seem very rebellious, her act anticipates the modernist tendencies to criticize the status quo and to champion unconventional individualism over conformity, integrity over phoniness, openness over secrecy, authenticity over inauthenticity. "The passions and attachments of the world now appeared to her as they do to those whose vision is more elevated and more detached" (155), certainly more elevated than those in the provinces who respond to newspaper polls, and this 17-year-old emerges at the end as some kind of existential hero.

More than its *épater le bourgeois* rejection of conventionality, it's "the exploration of subjective experience" that qualifies *The Princess* as one of the first modern novels. It begins with exterior, public views of the main characters, but later gives interior, private views of the workings of certain characters' minds, and it is this interiority that distinguishes the modern novel. We are so used to this mode now that it's difficult to imagine how novel a passage like the following was to readers in 1678:

> She [the princess] was astonished never to have thought how unlikely it was that a man like M. de Nemours, who had always displayed such a superficial attitude towards women, was capable of a sincere, lasting attachment. She felt that it was almost impossible for her to find happiness in his love. But even if I could, she said to herself, what can I want with it? Do I really want to tolerate it? respond to it? Am I ready to embark on a love affair? to be unfaithful to M. de Clèves? to be unfaithful to myself? Do I wish to expose myself to the cruel remorse and mortal sufferings that love gives rise to? I am conquered and overcome by an inclination that carries me with it in spite of myself. All my resolutions are of no avail; my thoughts yesterday were no different from what I think today, yet today I do the very opposite of what I decided yesterday. (91–92)

Note how the pronouns shift from “she” to “I,” how the long, classical opening sentence breaks apart into the jumpy fragments of interior monologue. By means of this technique Lafayette exquisitely tracks the princess’s gradual awareness of Nemours’s interest in her, her own confused reactions, and Nemours’s startled realization that he truly loves this virtuous woman. Earlier novelists would *tell* us what was going through characters’ minds, but Lafayette *shows* us, allowing the reader to hear them process bits of information via their own subjective view of the world. Because of the nature of the world they live in, they have to make do with hints, gossip, looks, coded statements, body language, all of which are open to interpretation. “If you judge by appearances in this place,” Mme de Chartres had warned her daughter near the beginning, “you will frequently be deceived; what you see is almost never the truth” (26). Yet appearances are all most characters have to go by, and for some, appearances are more important than truth. When jealous Clèves learns that Nemours has visited his wife in the country at night, he stops his informant and doesn’t need to hear the rest: he’s convinced she has committed adultery, and even when his wife tells him the truth, he’s so committed to his subjective worldview that he states, “I feel I am close to death, and I want to hear nothing that might make me sorry to die” (138). A page earlier we’re told that “the scales fell from her eyes” (137), for the princess is the only character to see clearly; everyone else keeps those scales in place, like sunglasses shielding them from glaring objectivity.

This conflict between subjectivity and objectivity is what makes the final, lengthy conversation between the princess and Nemours the emotional climax of the novel. Until then, their exchanges have been limited, and always conveyed in the code of polite manners, leaving them to ponder afterward the significance of what they’ve heard. (The one exception is a playful afternoon spent trying to reconstruct a purloined letter they had both seen, but nothing serious is said during this charming if incongruous scene.) Ten pages before the end of the novel, they have their first real conversation, and it is a veritable orgy of words as both bare their souls and come clean on all their unspoken feelings. The silent girl of the novel’s opening pages has become a voluble psychologist of love, and makes her suitor see the world as she sees it, which has no place for him, or for any

man after the death of her husband. Afterward, Nemours "was out of his senses with joy and sadness, confusion and wonder" (151).

The princess's retreat to a convent at the end has a medieval ring to it—it's what King Arthur's Guinevere does—even though women of Lafayette's time, like Villedieu, continued to do so to take a break from the real world. But it is one of many allusions to medieval romance—there are tournaments, stag hunts, prophecies, a prince lost in the forest coming upon his lady's castle—and represents a much more sophisticated handling of the conventions of fiction than in *Zayde*. There are interlaced stories in *The Princess* as in heroic romances, but they are only 5–10 pages long, formally integrated into the narrative rather than set off with their own titles, and are integral to the main story, even heuristic because they teach the princess and the reader valuable lessons. She flouts the rules that both society and the conventions of the romantic novel expected a princess of the realm to follow. There's a reference to Marguerite of Navarre's *Heptameron*, which the princess has apparently read hot off the presses—it was published in 1559, the year this novel takes place—and her reference to "the cruel remorse and mortal sufferings that love gives rise to" sounds like a capsule summary of the book. *The Princess* is a cleaner transition from romance to novel than *Zayde*, retaining only enough of the older conventions to add some fairytale sugarcoating to the bitter pill the reader swallows in this darker, more pessimistic work.

The Princess de Clèves is an antilove story, for Lafayette qualifies the appeal of love by describing it in paradoxical terms: after the princess confesses to her husband, he says, "You have made me unhappy by the greatest proof of fidelity that a woman has ever given her husband" (96), and after eavesdropping on this confession, Nemours "was at once deliriously happy and unspeakably miserable" (99). Later, her "indulgent words and glances would not, perhaps, have increased M. de Nemours's love as effectively as this austere conduct" (102). Pain and sweetness, regret and delight: in *The Princess* love is an oxymoron, not the straightforward passion of earlier novels but twisted and more complicated, even perverse. Voyeurism is the preferred position in this sexless novel: Nemours spies on the princess at Coulommiers "and could scarcely control his rapture at the sight. It was hot, and on her head and breast she wore nothing but her loosely gathered hair"; and she, after toying with a phallic cane belonging

to Nemours that she stole, takes a phallic "candlestick and went over to a large table in front of the painting of the siege of Metz that contained the likeness of M. de Nemours. She sat down and began to gaze at it with a musing fascination that could only have been inspired by true passion" (128). When he exposes himself a page later—that is, makes his presence felt—she bolts.

A final mark of the novel's modernity is the effacement of the narrator. Like the characters in the novel, readers get no clear guidance on how to interpret what they see; the subtle narrator gives only a few hints and nudges, leaving the text open to interpretation. The reader's own subjectivity comes into play, which is why I can champion Mme de Clèves as a brave nonconformist while another might dismiss her as a cowardly naïf who throws her life away in mindless deference to her mother's patriarchal view of a woman's role. (The novel's devastating final sentence unsettles any pat interpretation.) Since the novel was published anonymously and Lafayette never acknowledged it as hers, its early readers didn't even have an author to turn to for guidance; the burden of interpretation was on them.

The Princess of Clèves hit Paris like a bombshell. The first printing quickly sold out, translations were commissioned, and it immediately generated the kind of criticism a new Pynchon novel would today. Within months of its appearance a book-length study was published, analyzing it almost line by line with both praise and misgivings, which was followed in 1679 by another one attacking *it* and defending Lafayette's novel point by point.[72] Valincour, the conservative critic who was first off the mark, was upset by its novelty and its demands on the reader: "In these little texts extraordinary fictions are intolerable to the reader, because he is not prepared and he only expects a simple and natural story, that he can believe without forcing himself" (NCE, 135).[73] Unprepared for an extraordinary fiction like *The Princess de Clèves*, intellectuals realized the novel was a genre they needed to start taking seriously, and that the better ones would require some work on the reader's part.

As is frequently the case in literary history, a game-changing masterpiece clears the floor for a while, and no French novels of any great significance appeared over the next few decades. Matters were not helped after King Louis XIV signed in 1685 the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes, stripping Protestants (Huguenots) of their rights and booting them out of the country if they didn't convert to Catholicism. The primary result of what several historians call this "final solution" to heresy was a brain drain as talented, hardworking people fled theocratic France for more tolerant countries in Europe; but the secondary result was a chill that descended on the freedom of expression: no novelist wanted to incur the wrath of the king's moral police, so they played it safe for a while, confining themselves to unobjectionable commercial fare and escapist fiction. Joan DeJean notes that there were some women writers in the 1690s—like Catherine Durand Bédacier, Madame de Tenain, and the Comtesse de Murat—who continued to challenge the repressive status quo in pseudomemoirs and historical novels exposing the love lives of famous men, but since their novels have not been translated, I must refer the interested reader to chapter 4 of her essential *Tender Geographies*.

One novel from this period that has some claim to fame is *Hypolitus Earl of Douglas* (*L'Histoire d'Hypolite comte de Duglas* [*sic*], 1690) by Madame d'Aulnoy (1650?–1705), hostess of a popular Parisian salon. This short novel, set in the middle of the 16th century when similar Catholic–Protestant conflicts plagued England, is a mildly interesting historical romance, though way too dependent on stale fictional conventions: separation at birth, pirates, abductions, disguises, incredible coincidences—so incredible that the climax reads like parody—tyrannical parents, complicated contrivances, love versus duty, crossdressing, and endless misassumptions based on misleading or insufficient evidence. (The only exercise these people in French novels get is jumping to conclusions, as the Danny Kaye character in *The Secret Life of Walter Mitty* would say.) There are some teasing hints of incest and lesbianism, but the reader is warned in advance of the true state of things to avoid any outrage to her morals.

As I say, a routine romance. But at one point the eponymous hero of the novel is asked to tell a story to a woman having her portrait painted; "then recalling to his mind a certain story not unlike one of the old tales of the Fairies" (176), he tells the pretty tale of a Russian king who visits the Isle of

Felicity, where he learns that happiness doesn't last. D'Aulnoy was the first author to use the term "fairy tale" (*conte de fées*), and so popular was this episode that she went on to publish two collections of fairy tales, which appeared the same year that Charles Perrault published his more famous *Tales of Mother Goose* (1697).[74]

There is a touching scene at the end of *Hypolitus* I must tell you about. Julie, the much-persecuted, oft-abducted orphaned object of Hypolitus's relentless devotion, at one point evades her enemies by cutting her hair short and disguising herself as a pilgrim, only to attract the love of an Italian marchioness who takes her for a him. After the recognition scene when Julie reveals herself as a woman and is married to Hypolitus, the heartbroken marchioness decides to bury her disappointment in a convent; but before she leaves, she asks Julie to dress up one more time as a man for her benefit. "Julie, being then alone, was willing to comply with her desire, soon put on her pilgrim's habit, and came to the marchioness . . ." (255). That's a splendid gesture on Julie's part, and a daring one on d'Aulnoy's, given the sexual prudery of the king's censors.[75]

The most popular and influential novel written during the final decade of the 17th century—and the harshest attack on Louis XIV's despotic policies—was never intended for publication. The theologian and political theorist François de Fénelon (1651–1715) was the tutor of the king's grandson and heir presumptive, the Duke of Bourgogne. For the prince's edification, Fénelon in 1696 presented the 14-year-old with *The Adventures of Telemachus* (*Les Aventures de Télémaque, fils d'Ulysse*), a faux-Homeric epic in prose about the tutorship of Ulysses's son by Mentor, actually the goddess Minerva in drag. As the prince and his tutor search the Mediterranean region for Ulysses, Mentor lectures Telemachus on responsible living and responsible kingship, using as irresponsible examples Pygmalion, king of Tyre, and the reformed king Idomeneus, who was driven from his native Crete and, after a bad start, developed an ideal state in Italy under Mentor's direction. (The former represents the actual Louis XIV, the latter what Fénelon wanted him to be.) Running parallel to the events in the *Odyssey*, Telemachus's adventures come to an end when he arrives in Ithaca just as his wandering father returns.

As a work of political theory, *Telemachus* is important; as a novel, not so much. To give Fénelon his due, his intention was to create an entertaining textbook for his student, not a novel for the reading public. (The manuscript was leaked in 1699 and caused a sensation, not to mention personal difficulties for Fénelon after the king saw it; an authorized edition did not appear until 1717, two years after the author's death.) Nevertheless, it's an interesting combination of several genres of fiction: the recent *nouvelle historique*, especially in its transhistorical superimposition of ancient history (myth, really) on current events; the *roman héroïque* with its flat characters and supersized adventures; the fantastic voyage (like those of Cyrano and Foigny); and utopian fiction. Regarding the latter, Mentor/Fénelon describes several ideal communities that reflect his dream for France: a simple agrarian country with a rigidly regulated social structure—each level with a color-coded uniform and no room for social mobility or individualism—free from pomp and nonutilitarian art, ruled over by a benevolent king and a strong parliament: a kind of Spartan Amish state that sounds sensible, efficient, and utterly boring.[76]

One genre left out of the mix—and perhaps understandably so, given the book's 14-year-old target audience—is the love story, but Mentor's repeated maledictions against women and "that shameful tyrant" Cupid sound like a 19th-century health pamphlet warning against masturbation. Telemachus runs a seductive gauntlet of temptresses beginning with Calypso, on whose island he and Mentor shipwreck just after Ulysses leaves, and continuing with some nymphs on her island, shameless hussies on Cyprus, and other young women impressed with Telemachus. Just as Ulysses suffers the wrath of Poseidon, Telemachus is pursued by a vengeful Venus, who is insulted at his rejection of her flirty handmaidens. Instead, Mentor encourages Telemachus to blow off steam in manly boxing and wrestling, despite the homosexual overtones: "Then they close foot against foot, and hand opposed to hand, clinging so close together that the two bodies seemed but one. . . . Telemachus, in order to improve his advantage, plies him hard; sometimes on one side, bending and shaking him incessantly, so that he had not a moment to recover his posture, till at last he threw him down and fell upon him."[77] In a clumsy move near the end, Fénelon has Telemachus admit out of the blue that he's in love with Idomeneus's previously

unmentioned daughter Antiope, a modest maiden straight out of Scudéry's central casting. Mentor says Telemachus needs his father's approval to marry, but hints she would make an acceptable graduation present. Aside from allowing that schoolboy crush, Fénelon—an ordained priest and archbishop—has nothing good to say about love and sex, neither of which has a place in his sedate utopia.

Fénelon leavens his hard lessons with enough nonutilitarian descriptions of landscapes, mythological wonders, and battle scenes to qualify *Telemachus* as a novel rather than a pedagogical tract, and not surprisingly it appealed to 18th-century novelists as much as to political theorists like Montesquieu and Robespierre. Characters in novels by Marivaux and Prévost read *Telemachus* and imitate its protagonists. For Fielding, who mentions it in the preface to *Joseph Andrews*, *Telemachus* was the link between the ancient epic and his conception of the modern comic novel as an epic poem in prose. The Mentor–Telemachus relationship became a popular pairing in novels, though not always respectfully (see Voltaire's Pangloss and Candide, Fielding's Parson Adams and Joseph Andrews and/or Partridge and Tom Jones, and similar pairings in translator Smollett's own novels). *Telemachus* showed philosophers that the novel could be an attractive vehicle for popularizing their views, and showed sniffy detractors that the novel need not be a womanish entertainment but could teach youth strong moral values. (Throughout the 18th century, *Telemachus* was a popular gift for older children.) At times Fénelon expresses himself with Voltairic scorn, as when the narrator gives this gods'-eye view of our planet:

> they saw the globe of the earth as no bigger than a little heap of mud; the immense seas seemed to them only some splashes of water with which this piece of mud is slightly soaked: the largest kingdoms are but as grains of sand upon the surface of this mud; and the vastest multitudes, and most numerous armies, appear but as ants contending about a blade of grass on this piece of mud. The immortal gods laugh at the most serious affairs with which weak mortals are agitated, and count them no better than children's play. What men call grandeur, glory, power, and

> deep policy, in the eye of these supreme divinities is nothing more than misery and weakness. (116)[78]

But the novel's lessons on commendable virtues like honesty, simplicity, moderation, sobriety, courage, patience, and modesty—not to mention its nascent republicanism—gave it wide appeal. Rousseau admired *Telemachus* immensely; it's praised in *Julie* (part 2, letter 18) and is the only novel besides *Robinson Crusoe* that he allows his Emile to read. Moritz's miserable young Anton Reiser loves it. *Telemachus* did not play the role Fénelon intended—the Duke of Bourgogne died before he could inherit the throne and put it to use—but the novel inspired more people than he could imagine.

Fénelon had no intention of joining "the 'lower depths' reserved for those who composed novels," as one of his contemporaries charged.[79] Which is just as well, for there was a certain amount of floundering in those lower depths at the beginning of the 18th century. "The situation of the novel, in terms of theory," writes English Showalter in *The Evolution of the French Novel*, "can be summed up as chaotic" (65). Historical novels and pseudomemoirs were still popular, but fidelity to the historical record cramped the novelist's imagination; on the other hand, *too* much imagination, it could be argued, took wing in the charming but insubstantial fairy tales then in vogue, which (despite the subtle social criticism in some) were too redolent of the nursery to satisfy readers with more mature tastes. The latter trend was reinforced by the dazzling arrival in 1704 of the first volumes of Antoine Galland's translation of *The Arabian Nights*, which opened new hatches for escapist fiction and provided a magic carpet for a host of hacks to hop on and imitate. A fastidious bibliophile of the time (with a fondness for alliteration) could be forgiven for feeling that French fiction had fallen into frivolity, first with La Fontaine's *Fables* (1668–94), followed by female-formulated fairy tales, Fénelon's faux-Homeric fiction, and now fanciful fabrications from far Araby. *Fatras* (balderdash), our next author called them. Fighting fire with fire, a Frenchified fabulist with a very unFrench name decided to reorient this phase of French fiction by refashioning these fantasies for more sophisticated readers.

Anthony Hamilton (1646–1720) was born in Ireland but spent most of his life in France, where his Catholic family moved after the beheading of Charles I in 1649. A witty, well-read member of the aristocracy, he didn't think much of the flood of fairy tales that had displaced the stately river of 17th-century French novels culminating with *Telemachus*, and since the reading public's enthusiastic embrace of *The Arabian Nights* promised more of the same, "he set himself to accomplish for the fairy-tale what Cervantes had accomplished for the tales of chivalry,"[80] namely, to mock their weaknesses and to offer a more satisfying alternative.

His first sally was *The Ram* (*La Bélier*, 1705), a short novel that metafictionally mocks fairytale conventions while unfolding a shaggy-dog story to account for the name "Pontalie" that Hamilton's sister, Mme de Gramont, gave to her estate outside Versailles. (Hamilton wrote [in French] for his sister and her friends, not for publication; most of his works circulated in manuscript and were published posthumously.) Inventing a beautiful young woman named Alie, whose castle a giant suitor named Moulineau threatens to storm via a magic bridge (*pont* in French, voilà Pont-Alie), Hamilton spins a delightfully convoluted tale set in 8th-century France involving Alie's druid father, his nemesis Merlin, a shapeshifting gnome named Poinçon, talking animals, a magic ring, an unreadable spellbook, flying chariots, unicorns, a knife that writes cryptic warnings, and some surrealistic metamorphoses, among other wonders—a vigorous workout that dances circles around what Clark calls the "overdressed, powdered and beribboned" fairy tales of Mme d'Aulnoy & Cie (233). But it's the self-conscious telling of the tale, more than the tale itself, that enchants us. Hamilton begins in verse (like some of Perrault's tales) for the first 15 pages, pretends he is adapting an antiquarian account by Jean Mabillon (a contemporary French Benedictine monk who wrote hagiography, thereby implying his saints' lives were as fanciful as fairy tales), and informs us that Alie, like Subligny's mock Clelia, too easily identifies with storybook heroines:

> She thought herself—so strange her fate—
> A heroine of the *Arabian Nights*—
> A book which she'd devour'd of late;

. . . . . .
And her memory being stuft
With this Arabian balderdash,
She thought that she, to save her head,
Must tell her lord some kind of trash;[81]

—which introduces the first of the novel's many interpolated tales, a literary convention Hamilton has great fun with when the giant's factotum, the ram of the title (actually the transformed son of Merlin and Alie's true love), offers to tell him the extended "Story of Pertharites and Ferandina." "After musing for some time," à la a La Calprenède character, "the ram begun thus:

> "From the time the white fox had received his wounds, the queen never failed to pay him a visit every day."
>
> "My woolly friend," said the giant, interrupting him, "not a word of all this do I comprehend. If you would have the kindness to begin by the beginning I should feel obliged to you,[82] for I have always found that stories which begin thus in the middle, have no other effect than that of throwing the mind into a state of hopeless confusion."
>
> "Well," said the ram, "I consent, though it be against custom, to put everything in chronological order; . . ." (474).

Thereafter the unliterary giant continues to interrupt him, criticizing the "customs" of storytelling and drawing our attention to contrived conventions and clichéd plots. ("You know how all these stories end," bleats the ram, skipping the conclusion [508].) One upset character is brought "to his senses by the process usually adopted in romances towards fainting heroes and dumb-foundered [*sic*] divinities—namely, by plentiful sluicings of cold water" (502). The same character in a calmer mood "could not resist talking to himself, not withstanding his great objection to this mode of proceeding in books" (497), and when the gnome tells a story near the end, he blames his faulty memory for several plot potholes. There are some sylphs whom the narrator suspects are "not true sylphs, but mere village maidens in disguise" (520), pulling aside the curtain to expose the mundane reality behind some fairy tales. (Some of the popular ones in

French salons were based on court anecdotes, and Clark informs us that many of the characters and incidents in *The Ram* were based on Mme de Gramont's neighbors in Pontalie.)

Exposing the devices of fairy tales, Hamilton uses the same conventions to create a fiction more suitable for adults. There is some nudity in *The Ram*, male and female, and there are obvious phallic overtones in the subplot about a sorceress named the Mother of Sheaths and her tireless efforts to find the right knife to fit her sheath. Hamilton darkens the fairytale world with several mysterious, occult elements—like the giant statue of Cleopatra in which the gnome is imprisoned and which leads to "the bowels of the earth" (463); in this regard, *The Ram* anticipates Gothic fiction and, not surprisingly, Hamilton was a great favorite of English writers like Horace Walpole, William Beckford, and Matthew "Monk" Lewis (who translated one of Hamilton's other novels). There are even some touches that anticipate the decadent French novel of the 19th century: "Grotesque figures, strange musical instruments, Chinese birds, and a thousand different sorts of Indian flowers, formed the chief subjects of the ornaments" (525), which would be at home in the collection of Huysmans's Des Esseintes. In the poetic prologue, Hamilton had promised the reader, "Before the story finds a close, / I can assure you, you shall see / A touch of actual sorcery" (446), and in fine metafictional form, that promise applies both to the story's climax and to Hamilton's own feat of literary sorcery.

Turning from the French fairy tale to *The Arabian Nights*, Hamilton produced between 1710 and 1715 two short novels that rewrite the conclusion to Galland's ongoing translation (which wouldn't conclude until 1717). Hamilton's biographer Ruth Clark says that after he "twitted the ladies at court . . . on the avidity with which they read each succeeding installment [of Galland's translation], they retorted by defying him to compose something in a similar strain" (241). In a footnote, she supplies an amusing alternate origin of the the first of these two novels, *The History of May-flower* (*L'Histoire de Fleur d'Épine*):

> The editor of the first English translation of *Fleur d'Épine* tells an ingenious but unauthenticated story in connexion with the name of the hero. "The conversation," he says, "happening to turn in a company in which he [Hamilton] was present, on the *Arabian Nights Entertainments*

> which were just published, every one highly commended the book; many seemed to hint at the difficulty of writing that species of composition. 'Nothing can be more easy,' replied Count Hamilton, 'and as proof I will venture to write a Circassian tale, after the manner of the *Arabian Nights Entertainment*, on any subject you can mention.' 'Fiddlestick,' replied the other. 'You have hit it,' said Count Hamilton, 'and I promise you that I will produce a tale in which Fiddlestick [*Tarare*] shall be the principal hero.' In a few days he finished his tale, which he called *Fleur d'Épine*." (251n1)

It surely took him longer than a few days, for the novella displays some elaborate plotting and ingenious conceits. It begins the morning after Shahrazad has finished the 999th night of her narrative marathon; her sister Dunyazad warns her that her last story was boring and thus she risks losing her head unless she can come up with something better. For the 1,000th night, Dunyazad suggests she relate "The Story of the Pyramid and the Golden Horse"—a tale in verse by Hamilton, only a portion of which survives—and for the all-important 1,001st night, Dunyazad volunteers to pinch-hit and tell her "dolt" of a husband a story "more extraordinary than all you have related."[83] It is indeed a fabulous performance, in which a clever young man rescues the kingdom of Kashmir from a princess with lethally beautiful eyes by stealing and returning to the sorceress Serena four treasures, including her abducted daughter May-flower, with whom Tarare —unfortunately called "Pooh-pooh" in the English translation—falls in love and to whom he remains devoted even though she wastes away from a rival witch's spell. It's all too complicated to summarize, especially the way Dunyazad weaves her tale in and out of the frame narrative, but it's amazing to watch how Hamilton introduces marvelous but seemingly random incidents that don't become significant until backstories are filled in near the end of the novella. Tarare is as resourceful as any Arabian adventurer—to avoid the princess's deadly gaze he invents sunglasses, their first appearance in literature, I believe—though May-flower is more like a languishing Western heroine than a cunning Eastern one. Hamilton downplays the Islamic atmosphere of the original tales, but he certainly fulfills his promise to write something as good as any tale in *The Arabian*

Nights, and obviously had fun doing so. “Of what marvellous assistance is a little magic to unravel the meshes of a plot,” he says of Near Eastern narratology, “and bring about the end of a tale” (420).

But Hamilton topped himself with his ultimate Arabian novel, *The Four Facardins* (*Les Quatre Facardins*), which Saintsbury praises for scenes “which reduce the wildest of the *Nights* to simple village tales” (319). While *The History of May-flower* is a fairly faithful imitation of an Arabian tale, *The Four Facardins* adds elements of knight-errantry into the mix by way of a narrator who is a cross between Cervantes’ eccentric knight and Sorel’s extravagant shepherd. *May-flower* concludes with the fiction-addicted sultan turning on the 1,002nd night to Dunyazad’s lover, the prince of Trebizond, and commanding “him to relate what adventures had befallen him since that of of the Pyramid and the Golden Horse” (444), which Shahrazad had narrated on the 1,000th night. *The Four Facardins* begins there as Trebizond—whose given name, suggested by a parrot, is Facardin (Hamilton’s spelling of Fakhr al-Din)—promises to tell a “true” account of his most recent adventure. A vain Arabian knight who sallies forth accompanied by a scribe to record his adventures for future publication, Facardin #1 immediately encounters Facardin #2, another adventuring knight, who begins narrating his outlandish exploits (lion-hunting with virgins, surrealistic encounters on Mount Atlas) until an impatient Dunyazad interrupts and tells F1 to get back to his own story. Hearing about but declining an adventure in King Fortinbras’s Denmark—which would place our story shortly after those famously tragic events in Elsinore—F1 is enticed to a crystal city beneath the Red Sea where a jealous genie watches over his promiscuous wife, Cristalline the Curious, who then tells *her* story. Turns out she’s the unnamed woman who forced Sultan Shahriyar and his brother to have sex with her in the frame tale of Galland’s translation (see pp. 8–9 of *Arabian Nights’ Entertainments*) and has also had an underwater affair with Facardin #3 (unrelated to the other two). F1 escapes back to land, where he hears the curious story of Princess Mousseline the Serious. (Both Cristalline and Mousseline have nude scenes in this *nouvelle galante*.) After over a hundred pages of dizzying complications, eye-popping wonders, and tales within tales within tales, Hamilton halts: “But

the remainder of the Prince of Trebizond's adventures may as well be deferred, till you read the second part of the memoirs."[84]

Presumably that's where we would have been introduced to the fourth Facardin. It's unclear whether Hamilton abandoned the project—he had certainly made his point that a Western writer could match if not outperform the Eastern storytellers French readers were gaga over—or whether the sequel was lost. (The licentious writer Crébillon *fils* claims to have seen a sequel [Clark, 264n2].) At any rate, what survives is a dazzling display of imagination, a little silly at times, but a refreshing cocktail of medieval romance, Oriental fantasy, and fairytale motifs. (One of F1's tasks entails finding the right female foot for a beautiful slipper.) Hamilton's tales left their stamp on the more daring French writers that followed (Crébillon, Voltaire, Diderot) as well as the English Gothicists mentioned earlier, and form an Anglo-French link, as Saintsbury suggests (321) between Rabelais and Sterne.

But Hamilton is best known, and deservedly so, for a wickedly entertaining historical novel entitled *Memoirs of the Comte de Gramont* (1713), based on the life of his older brother-in-law, Philibert de Gramont (1621–1707). Hamilton selected and shaped his material to create the novelistic story of a caddish, reckless aristocrat who straightens out at the court of King Charles II of England during the swinging '60s with the help of a good woman—Hamilton's sister Elizabeth—with whom he falls in love at first sight and whom he marries, in proper storybook fashion, on the last page of the book. In real life, Gramont married la Hamilton much earlier during the events depicted, but Hamilton found it more amusing to organize his work along the lines of the *romans prétendus historiques* of previous decades by novelist/historians like Villedieu and d'Aulnoy (who likewise wrote a book on Charles II). In Cyril Hugh Hartmann's extensive commentary on the Quennell translation, where he meticulously separates fact from fiction, there are several variants of notes like this one: "If the book were pure fiction the chevalier's departure comes just where it ought to come in order to sustain the reader's interest in his wooing of Miss Hamilton. But, as a matter of fact, he left early in September 1662, long before most of the events related in the preceding chapters."[85] Hamilton plays with the older conventions of the *roman héroïque* as well, such as the

beginning of chapter 3 when young Gramont volunteers to tell a friend of a disastrous card game:

> "Here is a situation," said Matta, "which smells suspiciously of romance, except that it ought to be your squire who was telling me the story." "Very true," said the chevalier, "still, I can retail these earlier adventures of mine without doing any undue violence to my modesty; besides, my squire has a turn of speech rather less bombastic than would accord with the present heroic theme.
>
> "Know, then, that on arriving in Lyons—" "Is this the way to begin a story," Matta interrupted him. "Pick up your narrative a little further back; the smallest particularities of a life such as yours are worth relating." (3)

In the following chapter, "They set forth then, as it might have been Amadis or Don Galaor after having received the order of knighthood, seeking adventures and in pursuit of love, war and sorcery" (4). Near the end, tracking Gramont's thoughts as he returns to France from England, Hamilton writes: "Such, on a journey, are the amusements of a lover's heart; or such, to speak more exactly, are the devices by which a frivolous writer abuses his reader's patience, either to display his own sentiments or to spin out some tedious narrative" (11). All of this is just to say the *Memoirs* should be regarded as the French do, as a historical novel, not as the British do, as a work of history.[86]

For students of history, the *Memoirs* is a treasure-trove of tabloid revelations about the affairs and adulteries of Charles II's dissolute court. For students of literature, however, Hamilton introduced into the French novel a tone of playful irony, smug sarcasm, smiling malice, and hilariously euphemistic sexual innuendo. Here he is speaking of a newly married young woman willing to have sex with a former suitor in exchange for social advancement:

> The Duke of York had latterly somewhat neglected her, but the circumstances of this ill-sorted marriage caused him to renew his assiduities. She, on her side, permitted him to nourish hopes of a not very

> remote happiness which, before her marriage, a thousand considerations had made impracticable. She wished to be one of the Court; and, in return for the promise which she exacted that she should become Lady of the Bedchamber to the Duchess, she was on the point either of making him a promise herself or, so to speak, of paying him in ready money . . . (8)

Here's how a petite maid of honor sizes up a huge, potential husband: "He was one of the tallest men in England and, if appearances were to be credited, one of the most robust; however, she made it sufficiently obvious that she was willing to commit the delicacy of a constitution such as hers to all possible hazards, in order to become his wife . . ." (10). And here's how the wife of a scholar justifies her plans to take a lover: "since her husband preferred to put his back into his studies rather than into the duties of the married state, to pour [*sic*] over ancient tomes rather than over her youthful attractions, in short, to care for his own amusements rather than those of his wife, it would be excusable if she gave ear, from motives of reciprocal charity, to some desperate lover . . ." (10). This knowing tone can be heard in some predecessors like Sorel and Subligny, but Hamilton tuned it to perfection. Nor does he limit his sarcasm to aristocrats; Gramont witnesses a country wedding near the end: "Never had countrified grandeur been so aptly displayed," Hamilton sneers; "there were tarnished tinsel, shabby lace, striped taffeta, little piggy eyes and bursting bodices brilliantly apparent wherever one looked" (11).

Throughout, Hamilton exercises a novelist's art of selection, leaving out important events of the time (like the Great Fire of London in 1666) to keep the focus on the love lives of his characters, contrasting their promiscuity with Gramont's constancy to add luster to his brother-in-law. Hamilton's irony is more subtle here, trusting his reader to pick up on the contrast between his restrained treatment of his sister and brother-in-law (a real "bounder," as Hartmann calls him [11]) and his Truman Capotic exposure of the caprices of the upper classes. These warts-and-all portraits added to the growing tendency toward realism in the 18th century novel, something not appreciated by all readers: Lord Byron wrote, "I never knew a woman who did not hate De Gramont's *Memoirs* . . . women hate everything which strips off the tinsel of sentiment" (quoted in Clark, 218). Hamilton's worldliness, savoir faire, and condescension toward religion (he often adds

the phrase “as it pleased God” to his characters’ scandalous activities) appealed to dandies and libertines as well as to sardonic writers from Voltaire to Thackeray and beyond. I hear echoes of Hamilton in Ronald Firbank, W. M. Spackman—both of whom undoubtedly read the *Memoirs*—and William Gaddis.

But one mustn’t try too hard to enlist Count Hamilton in the ranks of French novelists, a commission he would have declined. He wrote the *Memoirs* between *The Ram* and his Arabian pastiches (i.e., 1705–10) solely for the benefit of his friends, some of whom made copies of the manuscript, which led to its anonymous publication in 1713, against his wishes. The reading public loved it, but, as Clark notes, “it could hardly please Hamilton to contribute to the amusement of the bourgeoisie by a work that was not intended for it and to have his family affairs discussed by a class for whom he had always entertained a profound contempt” (204). Pardon, Monsieur.

In 1707, the year the Comte de Gramont died, a writer who willingly contributed to the amusement of the bourgeoisie published the first of two novels that would make him one of the most famous authors in Europe for the next two centuries, though he’s largely forgotten today. A student of Spanish literature, Alain René Lesage (1668–1747), after failing to attract much attention with his translations and imitations of classic Spanish plays, reworked Luis Vélez de Guevara’s 1641 novel *El Diablo cojuelo* as *The Devil upon Crutches* (*Le Diable boiteux*), a damning indictment of human folly that went through three editions in its first year and was so popular that two cavaliers reportedly drew swords and fought over the last copy in a bookshop.

The original edition of 1707 takes place in Madrid over the course of one October night. A college student named Cleofas Zambullo escapes from a woman’s apartment, eludes some thugs the women hired to either kill him or force him to marry her, and hides in an absent astrologer’s garret. The demon Asmodeus—aka the limping devil (the literal meaning of *diable boiteux*)—trapped in a phial, begs Zambullo to break the vessel and release him; after Zambullo does so, Asmodeus rewards him by whisking him away to the top of a church steeple to show him “ ‘all that is passing in Madrid;’ . . . As he spoke, he extended his right arm, the roofs disappeared, and the Student’s astonished sight penetrated the interior of the surrounding

dwellings as plainly as if the noon-day sun shone over them."[87] With his supernatural insight into the lives of the people thus uncovered, Asmodeus offers quick character sketches and anecdotes of numerous *madrileños*. The pair go to a prison for more anecdotes, then to a madhouse, then to a cemetery, then back to the city to reveal the dreams of sleepers. There the 1707 edition ended, but in the expanded 1726 edition Asmodeus and his auditor go on to discuss the gradually waking world of fakes, phonies, and fools, witness the return of some captives from Algiers, then part ways as Zambullo prepares to marry a rich girl he had rescued from a fire the night before—actually, Asmodeus in the student's form.

As though realizing his heartless sketches could grow monotonous, Asmodeus sprinkles some longer stories into his nightlong narrative, which, like the overall plan for the novel, were pilfered from other Spanish sources.[88] One of them, the novella-length "Force of Friendship" (chaps. 13 and 15), features a few honorable, trustworthy characters; but the hundred or so other characters that populate Lesage's novel display every form of folly and vice: greed, dishonesty, selfishness, ingratitude, infidelity, hypocrisy, pettiness, arrogance, vindictiveness, jealousy, stinginess, self-deception, vanity—a Noah's Ark of human failings. Lesage gives only a few examples of outright criminal behavior; he's more concerned with legal but reprehensible acts like hoarding money, kissing up to superiors, leaving a devoted servant out of a will, forbidding one's daughters to marry to avoid providing dowries, or thoughtless behavior like that of an old painter who "left home at seven o'clock this morning in search of a confessor, as his wife was at the point of death; but happening to meet with a boon companion, he went with him to a tavern, and forgot his wife until ten this evening, when he returned to find she had died unshriven" (8). The madhouse and cemetery scenes are especially grim, and especially effective because structurally they occur in the middle, so that the novel descends to this low point, then gradually ascends to the happy ending. But that conclusion isn't enough to lift the thick and sullen air of human folly and futility that hangs over the novel, similar to that in Samuel Johnson's lugubrious "Vanity of Human Wishes" (1749), where likewise readers "Remark each anxious toil, each eager strife, / And watch the busy scenes of crowded life." Lesage envisioned a comic novel, but this is black humor.

The Devil upon Crutches isn't a particularly original work; as noted, it's an assemblage of earlier Spanish works, and I assume Lesage was being self-deprecatory when Asmodeus points out an author who "is surrounded by a thousand volumes, and is composing one, on Natural History, in which there will not be a line of his own. He pillages these books and manuscripts without mercy; and, although he does nothing but arrange and connect his larcenies, he has more vanity than the most original writer upon earth" (6). (In fact, authors of all stripes are mocked in the novel; Lesage had no illusions about his profession.) Nonetheless, the communal overview is an attractive concept, and anticipates such novels as Anderson's *Winesburg, Ohio*, Perec's *Life A User's Manual*, and Ryman's *253* (not to mention Masters's *Spoon River Anthology*, Wilder's *Our Town*, and Thomas's *Under Milk Wood*). But more intriguingly, *The Devil upon Crutches* literalizes the turn toward interiority the novel was taking at this time, even anticipating Proust's X-ray vision; like Asmodeus, the novelist no longer confines himself to the public actions of his characters but now explores their private, secret lives: "To unlock for you the secret chambers of the human heart," the devil/novelist boasts, "I will explain in what all these persons that you see are engaged. All shall be open to you; I will discover the hidden motives of their deeds, and reveal to you their unbidden thoughts" (3). The new novelist possesses superior powers of observation, a seemingly supernatural ability to see through walls, to read people's dreams even—or at least the diabolical illusion of doing so. Summarizing his demonic job description, Asmodeus states: "I make absurd matches; I marry greybeards with minors, masters with servants, girls with small fortunes with tender lovers who have none. It is I who introduced into this world luxury, debauchery, games of chance, and chemistry. I am the author of the first cookery book, the inventor of festivals, of dancing, music, plays, and of the newest fashions" (1)—in other words, the stuff of fiction. Our author isn't much to look at—he's only two and a half feet high, a caped Cupid on crutches—and as he narrates his stories he is often interrupted by the student—sometimes to ask a question, to criticize a point, or because distracted by something—which comically but accurately dramatizes the author–reader relationship. However, Lesage demonizes (but in a good way) the novelist's omniscience; henceforth, the novelist will be a betrayer of secrets, a psychologist of the hidden motives that drive people. In a

famous homage to *The Devil upon Crutches*, Charles Dickens suggests novelists should use their omniscience not to expose people to ridicule (as Lesage does) but to inspire them to become better:

> Oh for a good spirit who would take the house-tops off, with a more potent and benignant hand than the lame demon in the tale, and show a Christian people what dark shapes issue from amidst their homes, to swell the retinue of the Destroying Angel as he moves forth among them! For only one night's view of the pale phantoms rising from the scenes of our too-long neglect; and, from the thick and sullen air where Vice and Fever propagate together, raining the tremendous social retributions which are ever pouring down, and ever coming thicker! Bright and blest the morning that should rise on such a night: for men, delayed no more by stumbling-blocks of their own making, which are but specks of dust upon the path between them and eternity, would then apply themselves, like creatures of one common origin, owning one duty to the Father of one family, and tending to the one common end, to make the world a better place! (*Dombey and Son*, chap. 47)

Lesage probably wasn't that optimistic or noble about the novelist's role, and in fact may have aimed more for the lurid shock value that a disgusted Dickens, in another reference to *The Devil upon Crutches*, later observed in American tabloid newspapers "dealing in round abuse and blackguard names; pulling off the roofs of private houses, as the Halting Devil did in Spain; pimping and pandering for all degrees of vicious taste, and gorging with coined lies the most voracious maw; imputing to every man in public life the coarsest and the vilest motives; scaring away from the stabbed and prostrate body-politic every Samaritan of clear conscience and good deeds; and setting on, with yell and whistle and the clapping of foul hands, the vilest vermin and worst birds of prey."[89] A new manifesto for fiction, or trashy entertainment? *The Devil upon Crutches* swings both ways.

In 1886, Henri Van Laun introduced his new translation of Lesage's next novel thus: "With the exception of *Don Quixote*, Lesage's masterpiece, *The History of Gil Blas of Santillana*, is the most widely known of all European works of fiction."[90] That was the last time the novel was translated into

English, and while today it may not quite be the *least* known of all European works of fiction, there is no better example of the changing winds of literary fashion. Published over a 20-year period in three installments (books 1–6, 1715; 7–9, 1724; 10–12, 1735), *Gil Blas*'s popularity is easily accounted for: it's an entertaining rags-to-riches story of an affable young man of average morals—fairly honest but not above petty crimes and, later, the temptations of money and power—who leaves home at age 17 and undergoes a variety of adventures in Spain at the beginning of the 17th century, which Gil narrates at a good clip. No sooner does he leave home then he is robbed, then taken prisoner by some highwaymen, whom he serves in their underground hideout for a while before making a daring escape. In modified picaresque form—Gil is called a *pícaro* at one point (8.2), but Lesage romanticizes the genre—he is fleeced by grifters and serves a number of masters, none of whom lasts very long, and eventually stumbles his way up the social ladder until he becomes the confidant of two successive prime ministers of Spain. At this point, Lesage switches genres from the picaresque to the fictional memoir. Around the age 40 Gil marries for money, loses her 14 months later, gets embroiled in Spanish politics, is thrown in jail, eventually receives a patent for nobility and marries again around age 60 (to a woman of 19 or 20), then retires to write these memoirs. Aside from some sexual innuendo and knowing observations on the promiscuity of actresses, *Gil Blas* is fairly chaste, and except for an attempted enema that backfires, the humor is clean. Like Scarron's *Comic Novel, Gil Blas* has much to do about theater life, and there are several "all the world's a stage" metaphors throughout.[91] The novel promotes an optimistic, roll-with-it attitude toward life's ups and downs, and is narrated in a style that is "light and easy" (8.2), "concise and even elegant" (11.5), as Gil's employers say about his own writing style. Lesage made sure to give him a classical education so that he could indulge in occasional literary allusions and learned wit, as when Gil refers to some physicians as "notable servants of the goddess Libitina" (9.8), the Roman goddess of funerals. It's often funny, is populated with colorful characters from all walks of life, and its 700 pages fly by painlessly. A textbook bildungsroman, *Gil Blas* earned and deserved its popularity.

But it's also easy to see why its popularity has faded. In "The Author's Declaration" Lesage promises "to represent human life such as it really is"—a bold declaration in 1715 when realism was still a novelty—but he pulls his punches throughout, as he admits in the very next paragraph: "those who are acquainted with the disorderly lives of the actresses in Madrid may reproach me with having described their irregularities too indulgently; but I thought it necessary to soften them slightly, that they might be the more conformable to the manners of our own country" (1:3). Besides, Lesage knew Spain solely from books; he never set foot there. Gil Blas censors his saltier characters—the blaspheming highwaymen "uttered a thousand sallies which I cannot repeat" (1.8)—and many of the novel's incidents are likewise "softened"; near the end, for example, Gil attends an auto-da-fé, but he skips over the details of this Catholic crime against humanity to say only "When the ceremony was over, I returned to my inn, shaking all over at the dreadful spectacle which I just beheld" (12.1). It could be argued that the actual burning of dissenters would be out of place in a comic novel, but why then would Lesage even introduce the event? His highwaymen treat a captured lady much more gentlemanly than their real-life counterparts would have, and though Gil reports on many romantic intrigues, they are all curiously formal and passionless (including his own; he prefers the companionship his longtime companion Scipio, another *pícaro*.) In another sop to his readers, Lesage includes many coded references to current events and people in 18th-century France, but the modern reader has to turn to the translator's notes to decode them. From those notes the reader also learns that the novel isn't very original; there are scenes plundered from Vicente Espinel's *Marcos de Obregón* (see pp. 30–32 above)—which Lesage doesn't conceal; he even includes Marcos as a character—and from a number of other 17th-century Spanish novels and plays. These supply many of the interpolated stories Gil hears from various characters, which add little to the book but bulk, and the last 3 books (the 1735 installment) basically replay Gil's earlier court life and recycle characters from earlier in the novel, as though Lesage was too lazy to explore new satirical venues with new characters. The interiority promised by *The Devil upon Crutches* isn't fulfilled here; Gil Blas sticks pretty much to surface appearances and doesn't go in for much self-analysis. In all of

these matters—realism, originality, interiority—*Gil Blas* was quickly superseded.

To be sure, "surface appearances" are the targets of Lesage's satire as Gil discovers that few people are who they pretend to be: most doctors are quacks, authors are pretentious, clergymen are hypocrites, theater people are ridiculous, aristocrats are irresponsible, the Inquisition is staffed by thugs, and people rarely measure up to their public reputation. Gil gradually becomes disillusioned with the world, but he doesn't question the culture or probe it to any extent: as with the auto-da-fé, he merely shakes his head and moves on. Smollett, who translated the novel into English while writing his first novel, the hotheaded *Roderick Random* (a Scots *Gil Blas*, but angrier and shorter), complains in the preface to his own novel that Gil's blasé attitude "prevents that generous indignation which ought to animate the reader against the sordid and vicious disposition of the world" (xxxv). And while one shouldn't criticize Lesage for not being more sordid and vicious, it does help explain why his mild satire has given way to spicier fare. Regardless, it remained popular with the reading public into the early 20th century, and influenced many major writers over the centuries: though Voltaire was vexed to find himself mocked in it, according to Levi he nevertheless "plundered Lesage's text, borrowed his style, and took over his narrative method" (458). Fielding found *Gil Blas* more useful than *Don Quixote* as a model for his *Joseph Andrews* because it dealt with an everyman rather than an eccentric, and Smollett acknowledged his debt to Lesage, admitting *Roderick Random* was "modelled on his plan." As noted in the previous chapter, the German novelist Wieland borrowed some of its characters and settings for his *Don Sylvio*; the Spanish novelist Isla translated *Gil Blas* into Spanish; Sterne and Scott loved and learned from it; and in a letter to William Dean Howells (5 July 1875), Mark Twain said he had *Gil Blas* in the back of his mind when planning *Huckleberry Finn*.

The revised version of *The Devil upon Crutches* that Lesage published in 1726 opens with an appreciative foreword by a clergyman and writer named Laurent Bordelon (1653–1730), which is included in some translations (like Smollett's). Sixteen years earlier, Bordelon published an encyclopedic novel of learned wit that is largely unknown to literary historians. None of the critical studies of the period I've been consulting mention it, not even Showalter's *Evolution of the French Novel*, where he claims to have "read

or examined three-fourths of all the fiction published in French between 1700 and 1720" (6). He probably ignored it because it doesn't resemble a *conventional* novel, which makes one wonder how many other innovative novels have been lost to literary history because critics have too narrow a conception of the genre.[92]

In the spirit of *Don Quixote*, *The Extravagant Shepherd*, and *The Mock Clelia*, as Bordelon acknowledges in his preface, *A History of the Ridiculous Extravagancies of Monsieur Oufle* (*L'Histoire des imaginations extravagantes de M. Oufle*, 1710) is a comic novel about a bibliomaniac who overdoses not on novels but on books about the occult. The lengthy subtitle informs us that Oufle's "ridiculous extravagancies" were "Occasioned by his Reading Books Treating of Magic, the Black Art, Demoniacs, Conjurers, Witches, Hobgoblins, Incubuses, Succubuses, and the Diabolical Sabbath; of Elves, Fairies, Wanton Spirits, Geniuses, Specters and Ghosts; of Dreams, the Philosopher's Stone, Judicial Astrology, Horoscopes, Talismans, Lucky and Unlucky Days, Eclipses, Comets, and All Sorts of Apparitions, Divinations, Charms, Enchantments, and Other Superstitious Practices."[93] Half of the episodic novel recounts Oufle's outré adventures: convinced he's been transformed into a werewolf, he terrorizes the town with his capering and howling; reading that men "born on the fifteenth day of the moon" are great lovers (50), the geezer romances some local ladies, one of whom the narrator calls by the Cervantine name Dulcine; suspecting everyone of being a demon, even a carpenter's dog, he goes to ridiculous lengths to protect himself; easily fooled, he is spooked out of a bag of gold by his conniving younger daughter and crafty servant. The other half of the novel consists of arguments between Oufle and his rationalist brother Noncrède ("Unbeliever") over the validity of occult beliefs. Despite all the damning evidence Noncrède and others confront him with, Oufle remains steadfast in his faith; the penultimate chapter concludes, "Monsieur Oufle continued as whimsical and superstitious as ever" (286), and as proof, the final chapter consists of a document that he and his equally credulous son Doudou (a clergyman) draw up, based on their reading, describing a witches' sabbath. Unlike Don Quixote, Lysis, or the mock Clelia, Oufle doesn't recover from his madness. ("Oufle" is an anagram of *le fou*: the madman.)

The most unconventional thing about *Monsieur Oufle* is its format: the narrator, a rationalist like Noncrède, presents his novel in the form of a scholarly treatise. The exchanges between Oufle and Noncrède are set off as formal debates or as epistolary essays; the college-student boyfriend of Oufle's younger daughter—frustrated by her father's adherence to an astrological prediction that she can't marry before her older sister does—sends him a 60-page essay entitled "Critico-Comical Reflections on the Power and Effects Ascribed to the Planets, Celestial Signs, Comets, and Eclipses; on the Rash Folly of Horoscopes; on the Chance Predictions of Almanacs; on the Virtues of Pretended Talismans; and in general, on All the Chimeras and Impertinences of Judicial Astrology."[94] (The narrator describes the essay as "equally forcible, diverting, and comical" [102]—which describes the novel as a whole—and near the end, the narrator inserts one of his own essays, "Reflections on Magicians, Conjurers, Charms, Spells, and Conjurations.") There are copious footnotes throughout the novel, some taking up an entire page, which document with scholarly thoroughness the sources of Oufle's superstitions. In a typical comically erudite passage, after Oufle is robbed of his pistoles (gold coins) by what he thinks are ghosts, the narrator gives us this footnoted account:[95]

> The day after the loss of his thousand pistoles, he rose very early to consult his books, to learn thence what he was to do to prevent being tormented by specters and phantoms. He was unlucky in what he first read, for he found what he did not search for, I would say: the art of making frightful specters appear by a man's head, by putrefaction turned into flies, and then into dragons (*a*). He rejected this impertinent experiment, not because he thought it so but because, far from desiring to see specters, he was so tired with, and had such aversion to them, that he desired nothing but their flight from his house never to return. He then fell to reading what was more proper for his design. He at last found what he looked for, for there's no scarcity of superstitious practices both for and against specters; and it being only against these ghosts that he desired to be instructed, he took only what served his design. He found then that he needed fear nothing of that nature if he would arm himself with dew cakes and honey (*b*); or if he laid purslane on his bed (*c*); if he

wore a diamond on his left arm so as that it touched his flesh (*d*); or a chrysolite set in gold (*e*); or if he placed at the entrance of his chamber a nail drawn out of a bier, or some grave (*f*); lastly, if he carried in his hand nettles, and another herb called milfoil (*g*).

(*a*) "The ancients say that the hinder part of the head is its first and principal part; that it forms worms in a little time after the death of a man, that in seven days they become flies, and that in fourteen they change to dragons, whose biting is instantly mortal. If we take one of these and boil it up with oil of olives, form it into a light whose wick is to be part of a winding sheet, and fix it in a brazen lamp, we shall see horrible specters." *Admirable Secrets of Albertus Magnus,* bk. 2, p. 160.

(*b*) "Dew cakes with honey were given to those who entered Trophonius's cave to free them from any mischiefs from the phantoms which should appear." Le Loyer, p. 136.

(*c*) "Balbinus says that where purslane is laid on the bed, those in it will not be disturbed by any vision that night." *The Admirable Secrets of Albertus Magnus*, bk. 2, p. 142.

(*d*) "A diamond fastened to the left arm so as to touch the skin prevents all nocturnal fears." Cardan, *De subtilitate rerum*, bk. 7.

(*e*) "To expel phantoms and rid people of folly, take the precious stone chrysolite, set it in gold, and let them wear it about them." *The Admirable Secrets of Albertus Magnus*, bk. 2, p. 100.

(*f*) "According to Pliny (bk. 34, chap. 15), the ancients believed that a nail drawn out of a sepulcher and placed on the threshold of the bed-chamber door would drive away phantoms and visions which terrify people in the night." Le Loyer, *On Specters*, p. 326

(*g*) "Herbam urticam tenens in manu cum mille folio, securus est ab omni metu & ab omni phantasmate." *Trinum magicum*, p. 169. (98–99)

The narrator has droll fun showing off his immense erudition, as when Oufle arms himself with "anti-magical ammunition" from his occult library before approaching a woman he's convinced is a witch, though he's not as well-armed as he'd like to be:

> Monsieur Oufle knew yet some other preservatives, but being in haste he could not make use of them because they were not easily gotten; they were the following: The bones of one's relations (*o*); a bit of skin torn from the forehead of a hyena (*p*); certain excrements (*q*) not easy to be gotten when one will; a white sapphire, graven (*r*) talismanically; and a certain flower called plowman's spikenard (*s*).
>
> (*o*) "The Caribs, to secure themselves against charms and spells, put into a calabash, or gourd, the hair or some bones of their dead relatives, saying that the spirit of the dead speaks in them and warns them of the designs of their enemies." De la Borde, *The World Bewitched*, vol. 1, p. 128.
>
> (*p*) According to Pliny (bk. 22, chap. 3), 'twas customary to tear the skin off the forehead of a hyena and wear it about one against enchantments.
>
> (*q*) Some daub the out and insides of their ships with the excrements of pure virgins to preserve them from evil spirits, according to Damião de Góis of Portugal, *De Lappiorum regione.*
>
> "The menstruous blood of a woman stuck on the posts of the doors of the house dissolves charms." Le Loyer, p. 830.
>
> (*r*) Pliny says (bk. 37, chap. 9) that a white sapphire on which the sun and the moon is engraved, hung about the neck with the hair of Cynocephali [a legendary dog-headed tribe of people], is an efficacious remedy against charms, and bellows the favor of kings. But we must first find the Cynocephali, which never yet were in being. Bodin, *Demonomania*, p. 282.
>
> (*s*) Some amongst the ancients wore on their foreheads, made up like a crown, the flower called plowman's spikenard, in Latin *baccharis*, for fear of being charmed by an ill tongue, which Virgil thus expresses:

. . . Bacchare frontem
Cingite, ne vati noceat mala lingua futuro.
Le Loyer, p. 256. (283)

Virtually all of the books cited in the notes are included in Oufle's library, which is catalogued in chapter 2. No doubt inspired by the bibliographic chapter in Rabelais's *Gargantua and Pantagruel* (2.7), the narrator devotes the entire chapter to listing and selectively annotating the principal books in Oufle's library, beginning thus:

> Agrippa's *Occult Philosophy*. There is much more learning than certainty in this book.
>
> *A Description of the Inconstancy of Evil Angels and Demons*, by de Lancre. Amongst several curious things dispersed in this book, there is such an ample and very particular description of all that passes at the [witches'] sabbath that I don't believe I should be better informed concerning it if I had been there myself.
>
> *An Apology of the Great Men Accused of Magic*, by Naudé. We shall see in the sequel that Monsieur Oufle has not at all profited by the reading of this book, any more than of the following, which bears this title:
>
> *The World Bewitched*, by Bekker. This work is very pernicious, and it has also met with great opposition.
>
> *Physica curiosa* and *Magia universalis*, by Gaspar Schott.
>
> Bodin's *Demonomania*. 'Tis said of this book that 'tis a collection made with more application than judgment.
>
> Danæus, *De sortiariis*.
>
> *De Odio satanæ*, by Father Crespet.
>
> *Malleus maleficarum*. If witches are not at present as much talked of as formerly, is it not because this mallet has knocked down so many that there cannot be many more?
>
> Frommannus, *De Fascinatione*.
>
> *The Infernal Proteus*, by a German author.
>
> Olaus Magnus, *Of the Northern Magic*.
>
> *De Magis et veneficus*, by Golman.

The History of Doctor Faustus. He that is never so little fond of illusions and surprising things will here meet with a great deal of pleasure.

De Sortilegiis, by Paul Grilland.

Wier, *De Præstigiis dæmonum*.

Sylv. Prierias, *De Strigimagarum dæmonumque mirandis*. (8–9)

—and it goes on like that for five fascinating pages. In the footnotes, dozens more books are cited and quoted, including a few novels like *Le Comte de Gabalis*, *The Mock Clelia*, *The Devil upon Crutches*, and one of Bordelon's own earlier ones (*The Adventures of Mital*, 1708). The novel even has an index (omitted from the English translation), completing its resemblance to a scholarly tome.[96]

If you're not a fan of the genre of learned wit, the above citations might look ponderous and overbearing (though when I first opened this book and saw all those scholarly footnotes, my heart leapt up as though I saw a host of golden daffodils). But the scholarly structure and painstaking citation of sources is the narrator's way of imposing order and accountability on the disorderly world of superstition. *Someone* is responsible for the belief that menstrual blood wards off spells. Exasperated by people like Oufle who never question what they read, the narrator builds his case with lawyerly precision in order to win over his jury of readers, constantly resisting the urge to tear into a tirade against such idiots: "Return we to the exploits of our visionary; but in doing so, I really commit a sort of violence on myself, for I find I'm so inclined to an invective against the distraction of his mind, and the cause of it, that if I was not afraid of tiring the reader, who expects facts rather than moral reflections, I should enlarge myself as far as the subject would permit" (42–43; cf. 179). And the facts he introduces are the quotations from occult authors, whom he blames for Oufle's madness; he's a foolish old man who doesn't know better, but they are theologians and scholars who *should* have known better, who should have analyzed and verified their sources before committing them to print, and for that reason he introduces a mountain of damning evidence into the record.

There's a frustrated desperation to the narrator's tone because Bordelon was writing at a time when trials for witchcraft and magic, though on the

wane, were still held – in England a woman was executed for witchcraft as late as 1727 – and when superstition and folklore still possessed most people outside what historian Edward Bever calls "the social and cultural elite."[97] Bordelon emphasizes the havoc caused by superstitious belief whenever he can (just as Cervantes keeps reminding us that Don Quixote is a dangerous madman): after Oufle's werewolf adventure, a beggar is almost torn apart by a crowd convinced he's the werewolf, and "In one quarter of the city they got together in clusters and dolefully bemoaned an ecclesiastic who, being going to the assistance of a dying person, was obliged to return home by reason of the violent pursuit of this wolf-sorcerer, so that the sick person died without its being possible for him to give him the help which he wanted" (32). As noted earlier, Oufle's daughter is denied marriage "by reason of the disagreeable predictions of her horoscope" (101), and his wife is continually saddened and mortified by her husband's capers, "more ready to cry than laugh" (255). Oufle kills numerous animals for magical purposes, including his servant's pet blackbird, and assaults a carpenter he mistakes for a demon. In the penultimate chapter Oufle accuses an old, single woman of being a witch, and though in this instance she is exonerated, the episode is a chilling reminder of the thousands of women who were burned for witchcraft on the testimony of people as ridiculous as Oufle. Beliefs often have deadly consequences, a point lost on cheerleaders for multicultural relativism and tolerance.

"The tradition of ridiculing magical beliefs began with the early seventeenth-century *libertins érudits*," Bever tells us, "but their mockery was that of a small avant garde bolstering its sense of exclusivity in the face of an overwhelming majority who did not share their beliefs" (282). Erudite libertines were associated with atheists, and the narrator nervously notes that rationalists like himself are often lumped in with them; Oufle's library contains some books that refute superstition, but he ignores them and looks "on the authors of these performances as impious and men without religion, for people of his sort commonly believe all those to be atheists who are not superstitious" (2). For writers like Bordelon, this presented a problem: questioning the wonders ascribed to sorcerers implicitly called into question the miracles in scripture and hagiography. In her introduction to the Garland reprint of *Monsieur Oufle*, Josephine Grieder says of Bernard Le Bovier de

Fontenelle's *De l'Origine des fables* (1684), "though ostensibly its target was pagan superstition, alert readers were not slow to see its application to Christian beliefs" (9n3). Dutch authorities were not slow to see the application of Balthasar Bekker's *World Bewitched* (1691), included in Oufle's library, which attacks sorcery and superstition but was accused of fomenting atheism. Throughout *Monsieur Oufle* the narrator keeps harping upon the necessity of questioning nonfiction books "which treat of surprising, prodigious, and extraordinary things" (61–62), and though Noncrède unctuously exempts books containing "religious truths"—"I allow you are not to examine them strictly with an intention to inquire whether you have reason to believe what is affirmed to you concerning them. Holy, learned, and great men have done it before you, and the Church exacts your belief of them" (193–94)—this so blatantly contradicts the narrator's fierce allegiance to reason and inquiry that either *Monsieur Oufle* is a libertine attack on Christianity as well as other superstitions, or Bordelon was in denial. But he describes so many of Oufle's beliefs in religious terms that I suspect he knew exactly what he was doing.

A few years ago, A. J. Jacobs published a humorous book entitled *The Year of Living Biblically*; Bordelon's novel could be repackaged as *The Year of Living Magically*, and I can't imagine a more relevant book. *Monsieur Oufle* doesn't end with a recovery scene as in *Don Quixote*, *The Extravagant Shepherd*, and *The Mock Clelia* because Oufle is the type who doesn't learn, and "who will never own themselves in the wrong" (285). His descendants are among us today, reading their horoscopes, phoning psychic hotlines, playing "lucky" numbers, spooking themselves with ghosts, romancing the occult, mainlining mysticism, casting the *I Ching*, conning themselves with Kabbalah, adopting animal spirit-guides, calling down the moon, attending those institutions of superstition doing business as religions, bankrolling Scientology, self-medicating themselves with New Age nostrums, flirting with goddess-worship, spreading tarot cards, swallowing and regurgitating urban legends, practicing Wicca, calling on angels, and building a mystery out of the trash found in books likes those in Oufle's library, many of which are still available today in the occult/mysticism section of book stores. What for some of us are quaint and curious volumes of forgotten lore are for many citizens handbooks for living. *Plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose*, as the French say.

Bordelon's bold novel ends with this addendum to Oufle and son's description of a witches' sabbath: "But yet that I may conclude conformable to what the demonographers teach us, I inform you that the cock has crowed; for according to them, his crowing disperses this diabolical assembly and causes it to vanish" (303). After exposing the darkness of superstition for more than 300 "critico-comical" pages, the author hopes his readers will see the light. With the novel's insistence on critical thinking, empirical evidence, and the rejection of spurious authorities, Bordelon's cockcrow greets the dawn of the Enlightenment.

Lesage said the only purpose of *Gil Blas* was "to represent life such as it really is"; that goal was achieved with far greater success and sophistication in a stunning novel published anonymously in 1713 entitled *The Illustrious French Lovers* (*Les Illustres françaises*) by Robert Challe (1659–1721).[98] Though popular and influential during the 18th century, it dropped out of sight after its last edition in 1780 and wasn't rediscovered until 1959, when critic Frédéric Deloffre published a new edition. (Similarly, Penelope Aubin's loose 1727 English translation came and went, and a new, superior translation didn't appear until 2008.) Challe's realism is startling; *The Princess de Clèves* may be France's first "modern" novel, but *The Illustrious French Lovers* is the first that *reads* like a modern novel.

Set in the 1660–70s, it begins in a traffic jam; a man surnamed Des Frans has returned on horseback to Paris after seven years, and is rescued from the crush by an old friend in a carriage, a lawyer named Des Ronais, who invites him to lodge with him. They quickly catch up on news of mutual friends, tossing around names that mean nothing yet to the reader; this is how many modern novels start, in contrast to most older novels, where characters are formally introduced as each appears on the page. Des Frans only has time to change before he rushes off to a prior engagement, the story of which we won't hear for several hundred pages. (The novel is nearly 600 pages long.) Another friend, Dupuis, hearing of Des Frans's return, drops by several times but keeps missing him; Des Ronais had been engaged to Dupuis's cousin Manon and promises to give Des Frans the details of what went wrong there, but holds off when Dupuis returns the next day, at which point they all discuss the recent deaths of their friend Gallouin and a woman named Silvie (to whom Des Frans was engaged), the

recent wedding of their friend de Jussy (which is what Des Frans rushed off to attend), and Dupuis's forthcoming marriage to Gallouin's sister, the widow de Londé. This traffic jam of names and relationships is deliberately confusing for the fly-on-the-wall reader, and a daring opening ploy for an author writing in 1713—Aubin even apologizes for the confusion in the preface to her translation—but it's remarkably lifelike and modern-sounding, aided by Challe's plain prose and naturalistic dialogue.

Clarification comes slowly via seven long stories these characters tell each other and mutual friends over the next week. Superficially *The Illustrious French Lovers* resembles frame-tale novels like the *Decameron* and the *Heptameron*, but Challe dissolves the frame into the stories to create something new. Unlike those earlier works, the narrators in Challe's novel are also participants in each other's stories, with each successive narrator filling in gaps and mysteries in the earlier stories until the complete, multi-angled story of this group emerges. (As in *The Mock Clelia*, the auditors often interrupt the narrator to ask a question or to supply further details.) In form, it anticipates Lawrence Durrell's *Alexandria Quartet* (1957–60), where the first three novels occur simultaneously "as a challenge to the serial form of the conventional novel," as Durrell claims in his preface. In content, Challe's novel challenges the conventional mores and manners of the time, specifically the tyrannical power parents exerted over their marriage-minded offspring and the antiquated, patriarchal codes of honor imposed on women. Through his upper-middle-class characters, Challe criticizes religion, traditional marriage, obsession with money and social status, and institutional corruption (especially tax collection). Every story pits young lovers against old, repressive society, and dramatizes the negotiations they have to make to achieve personal happiness. Although men narrate the stories, the real heroes of the novel are "the illustrious Frenchwomen," as the title literally translates.[99]

As story follows story, they grow longer and more violent, tracking (as Lawrence Forno notes) the "greater passion and boldness on the part of the protagonists in pursuit of their goals" (117). In the first story, in which Des Ronais tells Des Frans how he fell in love with Dupuis's cousin Manon and then broke up with her, the young lovers are blocked from marrying by Manon's father, a gruff old soldier who has arguably legitimate reasons for

postponing their marriage, but allows them to continue seeing each other, instead of immuring his daughter in a convent or forcing the couple to meet secretly, as in other romantic tales. Des Ronais is left "with the choice of either giving her up, or playing the role of the perfect hero of romance until his death" (29)—one of many facetious references to novelistic conventions—and is rewarded for his patience when the father dies 18 months later, only to break with Manon after he discovers a compromising letter in her possession. Manon patiently waits for her hotheaded fiancé to cool down, confident the truth will out. (We don't learn the true story of that letter and Manon's innocence for another 100 pages.) She even jokes about it when she sees Des Frans the next day.

Later that day, Des Ronais tells Des Frans how, while he was away, their rich friend Contamine courted and married an orphaned chambermaid named Angélique, who held out for a wedding ring and intelligently maintained her virtue until Contamine decided to ignore the gap between their social standing. Thus an "unsuitable" marriage is made by adhering to the rules of snobbish society, allowing a clever orphan to beat it at its own game. Their story is a little unconventional but not too challenging to the status quo, and may be the weakest story in the bunch, especially from a technical point of view; Challe seems to forget Des Ronais is narrating a secondhand story he didn't witness and gives him unearned omniscience.

On the next day, a Thursday,[100] Des Frans and Des Ronais join a few other friends to trade further stories, which are darker and more transgressive. The third story features a cruel father who forces his daughters into a convent to avoid paying their dowries—Challe's views on monastic life are scathing—and blood is shed as a young couple defies church and state in the pursuit of happiness. A fierce Frenchwoman named Babette Fenouil dominates the fourth story, narrated by Des Frans after lunch; she defies convention and cohabits with her mild lover, gets pregnant, and lives outside the law for several years, and her sterling fidelity eventually results in a legal marriage. (These are the Jussys, whose wedding Des Frans attended the day he arrived.) The fifth story, the first to end unhappily, is narrated by Dupuis over supper and concerns a friend named Des Prez. Again, parental disapproval frustrates young love, which

leads to a secret marriage, pregnancy, jail, mother–daughter abuse, and a terrible accident that results in his young wife's death.

On Friday everyone gathers *chez* Contamine to hear Des Frans tell the novella-length story of his tragic relationship with Silvie, now dead. After falling for this mysterious beauty, he secretly marries her because his disapproving mother withholds permission, convinced Silvie's just a gold-digger. They live "in sin" for a while, but one night Des Frans catches her asleep in bed with a mutual friend named Gallouin, who drugged her with an aphrodisiac (as we learn in the final story, along with a shocked Des Frans). He resists the impulse to kill them both, but thereafter brutally mistreats Silvie and eventually dumps her in a convent, where she soon dies. Des Frans's auditors are struck dumb at this violent, tragic tale. In the first four stories, passion is portrayed as a driving force that allows couples to triumph over adversity, but in the fifth and sixth, to quote Forno again, passion is "a merciless, inexplicable, inexorable, and implacable evil force causing doom and destruction to whoever is unfortunate enough to be afflicted with it" (150–51). The group reconvenes the next day after lunch to hear Dupuis's lighter (but no less shocking) account of how he graduated from libertinism to respectability with the help of a good woman, whom he plans to marry next week. She and the unmarried women are sent out of the room for this Adults Only tale of a rake's progress, which is so licentious that some 18th-century critics called it pornographic, which in turn probably contributed to the novel's obscurity for the next two centuries. Beginning with his rowdy schoolboy days, which Dupuis compares to those of Sorel's Francion,[101] he brazenly tells how he lost his virginity at 13, then how he later joined a gang of libertines that included Gallouin. (This is where he explains how Gallouin drugged Des Frans's Silvie to have sex with her.) With brutal realism and coarse humor, Dupois recounts other sleazy exploits, admitting he was "the most despicable of men" (486) during this period of party-animalry. He straightens out only after meeting a nameless young widow whose cynical views on conventional marriage and advocacy of sexual fulfillment appeal to him, and who helps him mature over the next five years of their common-law marriage. They amicably agree to part ways, by which point he is worthy of Gallouin's sister, now the widow de Londé, whose virtue and sense of propriety drive him to the point

of suicide but complete his transformation from rake to gentleman. These last two widows conclude Challe's gallery of "illustrious Frenchwomen."

This innovative novel is a fusion of several earlier genres—the frame-tale novel, the Sorelesque comic novel, the memoir-novel (in his preface Challe says his tales are based on true stories)—but it also qualifies as French literature's first realist novel. Earlier comic novelists from Sorel to Lesage included realistic incidents mostly for laughs, or to expose the seamy side of life. But that's not enough to call such novels "realistic," as Ian Watt insists: "If the novel were realistic merely because it saw life from the seamy side, it would only be an inverted romance; but in fact it surely attempts to portray all the varieties of human experience, and not merely those suited to one particular literary perspective: the novel's realism does not reside in the kind of life it presents, but in the way it presents it" (11). This is the sort of wall-to-wall realism Challe introduced to the French novel, removing the older literary filters to render *everything* more realistically.[102] For example, when Dupuis throws himself at the feet of Mme de Londé to proclaim his love, he admits, "She raised me from the ground, an action for which I was grateful, as the gravel was biting painfully into my knees" (562). Challe is not merely deflating the romantic gesture but registering its physical sensation, something that wouldn't have occurred to any previous novelist. He describes the physical signs of sexual arousal with an attention to detail previously found only in pornography, reproduces dialogue with high fidelity, and unflinchingly describes numerous acts of domestic violence. The novel is psychologically realistic as well; as Philip Stewart notes, "*La Princesse de Clèves* justly passed for the first psychological novel of the modern tradition in France, yet even there psychology is stylized, fitting the moral categories characteristic of seventeenth-century analysis. It was Challes who heralded the descriptive psychology of the eighteenth" (*Imitation and Illusion*, 281). There are remarkably frank discussions of the sexual aspects of marriage (and alternatives to unsatisfying unions), unromantically realistic descriptions of waning passion, the money and paperwork involved in legal relationships, instances of the psycho physiological ravages of women's obsession with reputation, and exposures of personal defects that go far beyond Lesage's

comparatively softer treatment. Unlike Lesage, Challe doesn't pull his punches.

If the French novel was floundering in the decades following the 1687 publication of Lafayette's novel, then Challe's worldly, tough-minded work put it back on solid footing and opened the way for the stream of great French novels that would soon follow (and perhaps even some English ones; his novel is believed to have influenced Richardson's). As Showalter shows, *The Illustrious French Lovers* is "the headspring of the major themes as well as techniques of eighteenth-century fiction" (261), a breakthrough novel that every serious student of literature should read.

The novels of Hamilton, Lesage, Bordelon, and Challe, though sometimes hinting at current events, were firmly set in the 17th century. The first significant novel set in the 18th illuminates why that century became known as the Age of Enlightenment (*Le Siècle des Lumières*) and why the novel in particular became a favored torch of its luminaries.

In 1721, the year Challe died, Charles de Montesquieu (1689–1755) published an equally innovative fusion of fictional genres; his *Persian Letters* (*Lettres persanes*) combines elements of the oriental tale—still trendy at that time—and the fantastic journey in the form of an epistolary novel. But instead of sending his protagonist to the Moon or Lilliput, Montesquieu cleverly inverts the formula and describes the travels of a Persian named Usbek to the wondrous land of France. Consisting of 161 letters exchanged between 20 or so correspondents during the years 1711 and 1720, *Persian Letters* is a novel bursting with provocative ideas held together by a slim plot, which concerns Usbek's midlife crisis. He announces in the first letter that he and his young traveling companion, Rica, have left Persia for France "in order to pursue the laborious search for wisdom."[103] But we learn in letter 8 that the real reason he left was because he felt his life was threatened by enemies he made at court while fighting corruption and promoting reform; we also learn that he is undergoing a crisis of faith along with having difficulty keeping his harem in line. His desire for wisdom is nonetheless sincere, and during his nine years in France, Usbek gradually converts to European rationalism

(without, however, abjuring Islam) while his wives abandon themselves to disorder (lesbianism, disobedience, adultery). Increasingly disturbed by the French people's inability to act rationally, by religious doubts, and by dire reports of the revolt of his harem, Usbek confesses in his final letter that he has hit rock bottom: "I am prey to sombre melancholy and fall into dreadful despair; I seem not to exist any more . . ." (155). The novel ends on a tragic note as Usbek learns that his favorite wife, the treacherous Roxane, took a lover and then committed suicide—her suicide note is the final letter in the collection—and that European rationalism wasn't enough to prevent France from slipping into political and financial chaos in the years after Louis XIV's death (1715). All the time Usbek was comparing the laws of Persia with those of France, he neglected the only laws people like Roxane obey: "the laws of nature" (161).[104]

Montesquieu was as aghast as Usbek at what was happening in France at the time, but rather than write some sort of "Inquiry into the Present State of France" that would be read and nitpicked by a handful of intellectuals, he had the brilliant idea of staging his complaints in "a sort of novel" (as he wrote in his 1754 afterword), which not only reached a much wider audience but allowed him to get away with things inappropriate to a serious political treatise, and I don't just mean steamy scenes in a seraglio. By filtering his views through foreigners unfamiliar with European customs, he could let *them* make outrageous remarks on religious practices, political processes, marriage customs, manners, pedantry, the media, and other aspects of Western culture, all while innocently claiming to be merely the translator. And by using two Persians with different temperaments, Montesquieu could vary his cultural critique. Young Rica is merely bemused by the exotic customs of the natives at first; eventually he goes native and dresses in French fashion and accepts their attitude toward women, but as he learns more about French civilization his criticism becomes more pointed. He aims at perennial targets of satire— vanity, greed, religious zealotry, political corruption, pedantry, provincialism—which millennia of mockery have not been able to eradicate and never will. For the more philosophical Usbek, the differences between oriental and occidental customs drive him to investigate their origins, specifically those of law and religion, in order to assess their validity. (His religious

correspondents tell him to quit asking questions and just follow orders given in the Quran.) Usbek can't shake some of his cultural conditioning (the superiority of Islam and the harem system), but his intellectual curiosity and willingness to reconsider the very foundations of civilization convey the attitudes of more and more intellectuals at the dawn of the Enlightenment. Finally, alternating between these two outsiders allowed Montesquieu to make facetious juxtapositions, as in letters 24 (by Rica) and 26 (by Usbek), where Louis XIV's pursuit of the Jansenist sect is paired with Usbek's recollection of his pursuit of reluctant Roxane in the harem.[105] (The Jansenists got screwed under Louis' persecution.) Neither Usbek nor Rica question Persian customs, which are implicitly criticized throughout the novel – not from any imperialist orientalism on Montesquieu's part, but from his evenhanded condemnation of all irrational, unjust systems. He is an equal-opportunity critic.

His decision to let foreign visitors comment on things they don't understand not only yields comedy gold—*Persian Letters* is very amusing, despite the tragic plot—but provides a textbook example of what the Russian formalist critic Viktor Shklovsky called "enstrangement," making familiar things strange in order to revivify our habitual (hence deadened) way of seeing things. When Rica attends a play, for example, he notices as much activity in the audience stalls and boxes as on the stage and assumes that's the reason people go to plays. (Shklovsky cites a similar act of enstrangement in *War and Peace*, in which Tolstoy describes an opera from the viewpoint of someone unfamiliar with them in order to ridicule the spectacle [*Theory of Prose*, 8–9].) For the first readers of *Persian Letters*, it must have been shocking, if not downright insulting, to hear Rica and Usbek refer to Catholic priests as "dervishes," the Bible as "their Koran," and their pope as a "magician" who can "make the king believe that three are only one, or else that the bread one eats is not bread, or that the wine one drinks is not wine, and a thousand other things of the same kind" (24).

The equally brilliant decision to use the epistolary form allowed Montesquieu maximum freedom to pursue his dark satire. The epistolary novel was not new to French fiction; Hélisenne de Crenne wrote the first one back in 1539 (*Personal and Invective Letters*), and in 1669 French readers devoured the anonymous *Letters of a Portuguese Nun* (*Lettres*

portugaises), a five-letter *cri du coeur* written not, as it seems, by a nun to her absent French lover, but as a literary exercise by the Comte de Guilleragues (1628–85).[106] Among what one critic calls the "experimental novels" of Edme Boursault (1638–1701) are two short epistolary narratives: *Lettres de Babet* (1669), about "a merchant's daughter and her literarily inclined lover,"[107] and *Letters from a Lady of Quality to a Chevalier* (*Treize lettres amoureuses d'une dame à un cavalier*, 1700), dramatic epistles from a married woman to her lover before and after they consummate their affair. The latter is especially remarkable: the unnamed woman feels she can be more sincere in correspondence than in conversation (mere gallantry, she complains) and treats letter-writing as a form of love-making. (We don't get his half of the correspondence, but she keeps encouraging him to open up more.) The naked honesty of private correspondence also causes her to become rather unhinged when she suspects her lover has fallen for another woman:

> Is her beauty, or her wit, suppose them both superior to mine, a sufficient counterbalance for the merit of my love? She is ignorant of half of your excellencies, nor has solidity enough to weigh them as she ought; she does not—can not love like me—What have I said?—how vain is such a thought?—*Not love like me!*—Why should she not? Has she not eyes?—not ears?—Have you not perfections easily distinguished?—Yes, you both are equally enamour'd! *You* are divinely charming!—*she* susceptible!—*You* have made known your love!—*she* listens—*Your* quality may *claim!—her* fortune may *deserve!*—All things conspire against me—my ruin is determined! my dream is true. Oh! that I could cease to think—to live—to be.—Distraction!—Death!—Hell yields not half my tortures!——[108]

(Curiously, the guy isn't scared off by this crazed outburst; then again, he still hopes to have sex with her; he doesn't stick around very long afterward.) There's a great line in the 13th and final letter: "Virtue is not virtue till 'tis tempted," the mainspring of much fiction of this period. But the epistolary novel closest to Montesquieu's (and the most obvious model) is *The Turkish Spy* (*L'Espion du Grand Seigneur*, 1684–86), written by an

Italian journalist based in Paris named Giovanni Paolo Marana (1642–93).[109] Over a 45-year-year period a Muslim named Mahmut reports back to his superiors in Turkey on French culture, politics, and religion, much as Usbek does. The letters are somewhat lugubrious and paranoid—befitting literature's first spy novel—but for its French and English readers it opened their eyes to their insularity, popularized Cartesian rationality, and introduced ideas that lit the way for the Enlightenment.

Aside from *The Turkish Spy*, earlier epistolary novels confined themselves to one or two correspondents dealing with a private affair; Montesquieu expands the form considerably with a variety of correspondents writing over a long period and addressing both private and public matters, which allows him both to make comic juxtapositions of matters high and low and to insert mini-lectures on a variety of topics, which might seem out of place in a conventional narrative (unless it's an overtly didactic narrative like Fénelon's *Telemachus*, which Montesquieu admired). He takes full advantage of the elasticity of the epistolary form to include short tales, parables, a doctor's report, a traveler's critical account of Spain, and other documents, expanding the capacity of novels in general. And the fact a cultural critic would chose the novel as a vehicle for his views—a genre still associated then with womanish romances and escapist literature—testifies to the growing respectability of the genre among intellectuals. Montesquieu would later boast that his *Persian Letters* taught authors how to write epistolary novels (*Mes pensées,* no. 1621), which is only partly true, but he taught budding philosophes how to dramatize their ideas in fiction, a lesson not lost on Voltaire, Diderot, and Sade.

Montesquieu was 32 when he published *Persian Letters*; by that age, his hyperactive contemporary Pierre Marivaux (1688–1763) had already written and abandoned half a dozen novels for a career in journalism and the theater—he's best known for his dozens of romantic comedies—resuming fiction-writing later, only to leave his two most famous novels, written simultaneously, unfinished. And each of his novels is different! Here's a log of his experiments in fiction:

- *Les Effets surprenants de la sympathie* (The Surprising Effects of Sympathy, 1713–14): an old-fashioned *roman héroïque*, with numerous embedded *histoires*.

- *Pharsamon, ou les nouvelles folies romanesque* (*Pharsamond, or The New Knight-Errant*, finished in 1713 but not published until 1737): a satire of chivalric novels along the lines of *Don Quixote*; in fact, a later edition was retitled *Le Don Quichotte moderne*.
- *La Voiture embourbée* (The Coach Stuck in the Mud, 1714): a short novel in which four stranded travelers repair to an inn and improvise a novel, each one picking up where the last left off, until "all the characters drink too much and fall asleep on the floor."[110]
- *Le Triomphe du Bilboquet* (The Triumph of Diabolo, 1714): a brief allegory in which this faddish cup-and-ball toy (sometimes called the Devil on Two Sticks) is personified as an imp who mocks fashionable French society.
- *Le Télemaque travesti* (The Burlesque Telemachus, written in 1714 but not published until 1736): a comic modernization of Fénelon's *Telemachus*, which two of Marivaux's characters have just read, set in the French countryside. "With its strange mixture of literary allusion, vulgar language and critical observation of human beings, this novel is not easy reading, yet it is entertaining" (Greene, 27). In 1716 Marivaux also published a parody of the *Iliad*, but in verse.
- *Lettres contenant une aventure* (Letters Containing an Adventure, 1719–20): a five-letter novella in which an eavesdropper at a country house party reports on the conversations of two young ladies, one of whom owns a copy of Guilleragues's *Lettres portugaises.* Unfinished.
- *L'Indigent philosophe* (The Philosophical Bum, 1727): an ex-actor and his philosophical drinking buddy swap stories and rail against conventional society.
- *La Vie de Marianne* (*The Life of Marianne*, 1731–41): a long memoir-novel about a virtuous orphan, published in erratic installments and left unfinished.
- *Le Cabinet du philosophe* (The Philosopher's Study, 1734): the unorganized papers of a recently deceased scholar, including a

Voltairian novella (*Le Voyageur dans le Nouveau monde*) about a chevalier who travels to a land where everyone speaks the truth.

- *Le Paysan parvenu* (*The Upstart Peasant*, 1734–35): the memoir-novel of a parvenu. Unfinished.

Nowhere is my ignorance of French a greater handicap than here, not only because English translations of these intriguing fictions are either unavailable or inadequate (with one exception), but also because Marivaux developed a distinctive way of writing, called *marivaudage*—pretty, witty, and refined—that must be read in the original to be appreciated.[111] But here goes:

Pharsamond, the only early novel of Marivaux ever translated into English, is a hoot. Deciding to turn heroic-romantic fiction like La Calprènede's *Pharamond* into a farce, Marivaux schizophrenically mocked with his left hand the kind of novel he was writing with his right, for *Pharsamond* and the earnest *Effets surprenants de la sympathie* were written almost simultaneously. Set in modern times, *Pharsamond* concerns an 18-year-old bookworm named Pierre Bagnol, who has filled his head with chivalric novels; convinced that similar romantic adventures await a noble soul like himself, he brushes off the marriageable girls he knows, whose "perpetual gaiety shocked our young man to a prodigious degree. . . . These were in no manner heroines, they having discovered [revealed] a passion for him without allowing him to let their cruelty sink him to despair."[112] Eager to find a heroine who plays by the book, he becomes separated from his uncle while out hunting one day, muses on a scene from a novel in which the hero comes upon a beautiful maiden in the forest, wishes that something like that would happen to him, then looks up, and lo! he comes upon a beautiful maiden in the forest, speaking like "the heroine of a romance" (1:10). After a brief conversation with her—from "whom the pleasure of hearing himself styled 'knight' had almost struck dumb" (11)—he loses sight of her. Renaming himself Pharsamond, he sallies forth the next morning with his "squire" Clito—a clownish servant/companion who shares his love for chivalric novels—and manages to track her down at her overbearing mother's house. Calling herself Cidalise (real name: Babet), she too is a fan of romance novels and flips over the young man who acts

and speaks like a storybook hero. This is Marivaux's first modification of the Quixotic model: instead of a single character crazed by novels—as in Cervantes, Sorel, and Subligny—he pairs two bibliomaniacs, then doubles down with their book-loving servants, Clito and Cidalise's companion Fatima, who join the game of fiction. (Their romantic relationship parodies that of their employers, just as Pharsamond and Cidalise's does those in older novels.) Over a week's time, this quartet of bookworms clashes with members of the "real" world in a series of slapstick adventures until they are cured of their bibliomania by a wandering physician.

But Marivaux complicates his satire by including incidents straight out of heroic romances into the quotidian plane of his narrative: not only do little things happen to Pharsamond "like to those read of in romances" (1:54), but later he comes upon an isolated house inhabited by a young man and his servant who turn out to be two women in disguise; their tale is given in "The Story of the Anchorite," the first of two old-fashioned novellas embedded in the narrative in traditional *roman héroïque* form. Even though it is as melodramatic as any similar *histoire* in La Calprènede or Scudéry—orphaned girl suffers class prejudice until it's revealed she is of noble birth, only to suffer greater tragedies, sending her into isolation—the anchorite's story takes place in the "real" world of Marivaux's novel, not in Pharsamond's frenzied imagination. Same with the other novella, an even more far-fetched story told to Pharsamond by a disguised woman whom he rescues from a pursuing shepherd. The reader suspects these to be setups at first, like the tricks played on Don Quixote, Lysis, and the mock Clelia, but they're not: they belong to the everyday reality Pierre Bagnol inhabits and thus seem to validate Pharsamond's conviction that romantic novels are realistic depictions of a world that hasn't changed since the days of chivalry for those open to enchantment. (*Pharsamond* could be the idealistic novel many readers mistake *Don Quixote* for; imitating the protagonists of chivalric novels brings out the best in our quartet of impossible dreamers.) The romantic adventures of Pierre Bagnol and Babet may be make-believe, but those of the novellas' heroines, now living in their neighborhood, are "real"—until we are reminded we're reading a novel, where nothing is *really* real.

Marivaux keeps reminding us of that inconvenient truth throughout the work; knowing that he is incongruously mixing high romance with low

comedy and blurring the distinction between fiction and reality, Marivaux defends his unorthodox choices in a running dialogue between the narrator and his imagined readers and critics, the most outspoken example of the self-conscious narrator before Sterne.[113] Anticipating objections to various aspects of his story, the narrator calmly defends them at first, even admitting he doesn't exactly know what he's doing at times. As he builds up to the anchorite's tale, he worries what a captious critic will say and appeals to the more tolerant reader to trust him:

> Methinks I now hear some critic object: "This seems to promise an adventure of the heroic kind. You are deviating from the cast of your subject: we expect comic incidents, and this opening does not seem to offer anything of that sort." The critic is right in the main, for I should not have attempted a description of the adventure in question. The comic part of it may, perhaps, not please; I say "perhaps" for I'll do all I can to make it agreeable. However, 'twould have argued more prudence in me not to have run any hazard on this occasion. Hence I have half a mind to blot out the strokes I have writ above. What says my reader? "'Tis a good thought." But hold; this would be an additional trouble, and I dread everything of that kind. I'll therefore proceed. Must I, good Mr Critic, be obliged to furnish you, always, with subjects for laughter because I have done this several times? I beg you to forgive me in this respect. I myself am delighted with variety.[114] Follow me therefore, gentle reader; I will be so ingenuous as to confess that I don't well know whither I am going, but then the journey will give pleasure. (1:137–38)

After the anchorite's tale, the narrator unctuously solicits the reader's opinion, only to dismiss it with growing confidence in his ability to improvise:

> Well, gentle reader, are you satisfied with this story of our fair anchorite? "I was sometimes" (you will answer) "greatly puzzled." What does this signify? If I have extricated myself well, the more praise I shall deserve. When a person rambles he knows not whither, if he happens to guide himself tolerably, he deserves applause more than those who travel with a

> map. I can assure you (be this said without vanity) that I shall not be a little delighted with myself if I can but get Pharsamond away from here as successfully. Let us therefore proceed under the direction of chance. To which of the two shall we go first, to Clorinna [the anchorite] or Phrasamond?—Let us speak a word or so concerning Clorinna, and this being done we will make a transition to Pharsamond, who will not be tired with waiting for us. (1:229–30)

As the novel progresses, the narrator becomes testier and more defiant:

> Our knight admired many of these [paintings], which were originals by the best masters. "How the deuce" (will some critic say) "was it possible for Pharsamond, born and bred in the country, and whose best companions were a set of half-polished country gentlemen, to be a judge of painting? Content yourself with supposing him an adept in love, and stop there." Hold, good critic; shall I not be allowed to hazard some things, and must you be forever rectifying the slips and oversights that occur in my book? But I will take it for granted that Pharsamond might have done wrong in admiring and preferring some pictures in the gallery. But then he admired. I said so, and let that stand. I should be obliged to change many particulars was I to accommodate myself to your taste in everything. (1:283–84)

Then the narrator blows his top when the critic complains that only a trifling remark by Clito set in motion the manic mayhem the narrator has just described with such comic gusto; the exasperated narrator's reaction is worth quoting at length, especially given the rarity of this novel:

> "What a strange rhapsody" (will some serious critic say) "do you give us here! Your brain must certainly be much more confused than that of those with whose terrors you have entertained us. Chairs, stools, and tables thrown down, Dame Margery acting the madwoman in her shift, thirty servants making a strange hurly-burly, running up stairs and then rolling down them, and all this merely because Clito wakes and cries, 'Who's there?' "

> But why should this surprize you so much, Mr Critic? Had you yourself met with the like adventure, you then might have run away with a much better grace than you now criticize. You are surprized that a nothing should produce so mighty an effect; but don't you know (good logician!) that *nothing* is the motive of the great changes which happen among men? know you not that a nothing fixes and determines the mind of all sublunary mortals, that it destroys the most strongly cemented friendships, extinguishes the most violent love, or gives rise to it? that a nothing exalts this man, and ruins that? Are you ignorant, I say, that a nothing can put an end to the most illustrious life, that a nothing brings discredit, and alters the face of the most important affairs? that a nothing is able to drown cities, or set them on fire? 'tis always a nothing that begins the greatest nothings that follow, all which end in nothing? Know you not, Mr Critic (since I am on this subject), that you yourself are an errant nothing, and that I myself am no more? that a nothing gave rise to your criticism, on occasion of a nothing, which suggested to me all these idle whimsies?
>
> Here are many nothings, for a true nothing. However, I must extricate myself one way or another from this subject; but I love to moralise, 'tis my darling passion; and were it decent to leave my personages in the wide fields and not assist them, I would add (in contempt of the *nothing* censured in my work) that the famous trifles wherewith men are busied, and which are looked upon as subjects the most worthy of the human mind, are perhaps, to those who view them in a proper light, but mighty nothings, more contemptible (though perhaps more dangerous) than the little nothings like to those which, at this instant, drive my pen at random over the paper. (2:28–30)

This is a startling, even nihilist view of the role chance plays in existence, a leveling of all human accomplishments to mere happenstance. But for a novelist, it's a demonstration that a talented writer can make something out of nothing.

The second half of the novel is dominated by Clito's rustic adventures and Sancho Panzan dialogue, a remarkable infusion of realism into the French novel. After Clito narrates an apple-stealing incident from his youth in his bumpkin dialect, the narrator anticipates a fastidious reader's objection to

this lowlife stuff, for at this time (and for a considerable time afterward) many still felt that novels should feature only noble characters and lofty thoughts. Marivaux's narrator delivers a historically important declaration of independence from such expectations and a defense of artistry over subject matter:

> "How dull a character is that of Clito whenever he is made to spin out his discourse to so tedious a length?" will some grave reader cry, whose stomach the apples have soured, "and how greatly am I obliged to the guests for saving us from the remainder of his tale!" Harkee, reader. I could take upon me to defend the story of my squire and assert that it is excellent. I'll warrant you (may I argue), because it mentions apples, sparrows, and children diverting themselves, you thence conclude that the whole must be heavy and insipid. But know that the materials are [not] what make a relation sprightly or dull.[115] The gravest historian, in relating the fall of an empire, . . . is sometimes as dull as an account of two boys playing at blind man's bluff could possibly be. The pleasure or uneasiness we feel at hearing a story told arises wholly from the manner in which the subject is treated. And if the sport of such children as we are speaking of is but naturally described, and in a manner suitable to the subject, such a narrative may divert the mind as much in proportion as the relation of a great and tragical story shall exalt it. An apple is indeed an insignificant thing; sparrows are no more than sparrows; but then every subject, how low soever, may be raised by throwing the proper beauties round it. The only difference then is in the *manner*: and therefore it would be ridiculous to assert that a rural maid, though adorned by nature with the most lovely charms, is not beautiful and consequently could not enchant the eye merely because she is unaccompanied with all the pomp that glitters round a princess. (2:114–15)

Giddy with artistic confidence, the narrator begins defying convention and lording it over his creation:

> Our whole company are now got to bed. 'Tis three in the morning with regard to them, but 'tis no more than nine at night with respect to myself,

> for which reason I'll bring them all into action again as though they had snored away the four and twenty hours round.
>
> Up! up! I am instantly obeyed. Already the servants stretch forth their arms and rub their eyes. (2:116–17)

Nearing the end of his critifiction, the swaggering narrator has learned to trust his instincts and write to please himself, rather than worry about pleasing others. After he praises the "beautiful adventures" recounted in the second embedded novella, he spars with his imagined critic a final time:

> I say *beautiful adventures.*—Bless us! this is an expression will highly disgust a critic and force from him a malicious laugh. "Beautiful adventures!" he will cry: "if these adventures be called beautiful, pray what are those you term ugly ones?" Too importunate critic! I know not what kind of thing ugly adventures are, but I'll stake (by way of wager) the prettiest incident in my work that those I hint at are really beautiful. "Bravo!" cries my fantastical censurer, "*the prettiest incident in the present work:*—'Tis plain he has the vanity to imagine that his own book is interspersed with pretty and beautiful touches.—Very fine all this. We yet may pronounce that there are few touches of this sort in it, and that such are almost eclipsed by deformities." It will be impossible for me, severe censor, ever to get the better of you, and the only result of our contest (though ever so obstinate) must be this: you would prove yourself very morose, and perhaps tasteless (forgive this last word), and I myself should discover not a little vanity in so strenuously defending my book. A fig for compositions where the author is not delighted with what he writes, and consequently does not applaud himself; and especially when such a one takes up the pen merely by way of amusement, and that, whilst he strives to divert himself, he is not persuaded that he shall entertain others. (2:249–50)

Works for me. Marivaux's winning combination of comical adventures, metafictional digressions, and guarded sympathy for those of us who prefer the world of novels to the real one makes *Pharsamond* one of the most entertaining novels I've ever read. It's unclear why he didn't publish it upon completion; one censorious critic suggests it was Marivaux's "awareness of

its mediocrity" (Rosbottom, 62n9), which I don't buy. I assume publishers turned it down either because his previous novel sold poorly or because there were many other parodies and continuations of *Don Quixote* already available. When the novel was eventually bootlegged in 1737, Marivaux disavowed it, perhaps because the heroic romances it mocks were old hat by then, perhaps because he considered it incompatible with the novels he was writing in the 1730s. But *Pharsamond*'s influence can't be disavowed. Even censorious Rosbottom notes how the anchorite's tale anticipates Richardson's fiction (65), and the novel as a whole not only anticipates *Tom Jones* and *Tristram Shandy*, but according to Genette it is "one of the missing links between *Don Quixote* and *Madame Bovary*," another novel about a young woman who, like Cidalise, is driven to distraction by romantic novels.[116]

Such novels inspire ideals that are usually at odds with the way of the world; a variation of this conflict animates Marivaux's most famous and influential novel, *The Life of Marianne, Countess of* ***** (1731–41), whose teenage protagonist clings to ideals of virtue more suitable to the heroines of the romance novels she reads than to herself, an orphan dependent upon the kindness of strangers. Structurally, the novel is identical to Villedieu's *Memoirs*: over the course of 11 long letters, the 50-year-old Marianne dramatizes for her unnamed female correspondent the two tumultuous months following her arrival in Paris at the age of 15. Adopted by a country priest and his sister after her apparently aristocratic parents were murdered by highwaymen when she was two, teenage Marianne is taken to Paris by the sister, who takes ill and dies, but not before asking a monk to take care of the foundling. (The country priest suffers a financial setback at the same time, eliminating him from the picture.) The monk recommends the young beauty to the patronage of Monsieur de Climal, a pious hypocrite in his late fifties, who buys Marianne a place with a linen-draper named Madame Dutour, then begins plying her with expensive clothing and unwanted affection. Encouraged by the worldly Dutour to take the old goat for whatever she can get, the unworldly Marianne coyly tries to put him off while luxuriating in the gorgeous dress he bought her.

She wears it to church one day, flaunting her charms in what one critic has called "an artful striptease";[117] she notices that men are paying greater

attention to her than to Mass, so "Now and then, to keep them in play, I entertained them with the discovery of some new charm in my person." First she looks upward at the church's paintings, the better to display her beautiful eyes, then reaches up to adjust her hood so that she can reveal her "naked" hand and "a round, delicate, smooth arm, half of which was seen at least in the attitude I then held it." The coquette knows this pleases the messieurs because "a fine hand is in some sort an advance towards nakedness."[118] She is especially pleased by the ogling of a young aristocrat named Valville; on her way home, she hurts her foot in a minor accident and is taken to the closest house, which turns out to be Valville's. In another of the novel's many prurient scenes, Marianne is stripped of her stockings and Valville eagerly assists the doctor in examining her pretty little footsie. It's love at first sight for both of them, but conscious of the unacceptable gap between their social stations, Marianne returns to the linen-draper's without letting the young man know where she lives. Later that event-filled day, Climal is aroused by the sight of her in that new dress, and when he gets a little too affectionate, our auburn-haired beauty threatens to end their relationship and tries to return the dress he bought her, resulting in another striptease:

> And you must know [she tells her correspondent], that while I was speaking thus to him, I unpinned myself, and undressed my head, because the cap I had on came from him, so that it was off in an instant and I was bareheaded, with the fine hair I spoke to you of, which hung down as far as my waist.
>
> This sight entirely disconcerted him. (1:123)

Not surprisingly, this stops Climal in his tracks and he tries to patch things up by offering to set her up in a private house (as his mistress, it is implied); she refuses, he withdraws his financial support, and Mme Dutour reluctantly tells Marianne she has to move out. Bewailing her fate in a church, Marianne is rescued by Mme de Miran, who pays for her to stay a convent until she can sort things out.[119] In a novel filled with incredible coincidences, this kind stranger turns out to be Climal's sister *and* Valville's mother; at first she disapproves of her son's wish to marry the orphan—

what would society think?!—but later agrees after being won over by Marianne's aristocratic comportment and especially by her charming devotion to her. The marriage is delayed for various reasons, including Marianne's melodramatic abduction by Valville's relatives bent on breaking them up, as well as Valville's new interest in another pretty boarder at the convent whom he met when she too suffered an accident, necessitating the removal of her corset in front of his bulging eyes. In jealous frustration, Marianne contemplates taking religious vows, even though she has a new marriage offer from a fine gentleman who heard her story and admires her virtuous conduct; but another nun, named Tervire, tries to dissuade Marianne from the religious life by telling her life story, a novella-length narrative that occupies the final three installments of *Marianne*. It breaks off near what was probably the end of the nun's story, followed by a promise by Marianne to conclude both it and her own story, but Marivaux abandoned the novel at that point. Though he lived for another 20 years, he never bothered to write the conclusion nor tell how he planned to end it. Peter Brooks convincingly argues that Marivaux already achieved his end: "Marivaux is really interested only in a moment of his character's life, the moment of confrontation with worldliness. This confrontation provokes Marianne's 'explication' of self, and it is her movement into a state of lucid social consciousness and self-consciousness that forms the true subject of the novel" (135–36). The subtitle indicates Marianne eventually fulfilled her aristocratic destiny, and a number of other writers jumped in to connect the dots in sequels and continuations, but these don't concern us.

What does concern us is Marivaux's innovations, beginning with his treatment of narrative time. Once Marianne arrives in Paris, the narrative slows to a crawl as she analyzes and defends her actions in minute detail, thickens descriptions of the characters and situations she encounters, quibbles with her conscience, and reflects on human nature. Sometimes she apologizes for her digressions—which provoked criticism by some early readers, not accustomed to such lengthy reflections by characters—and admits her account of an event often takes longer than the event itself. But she is trying both to capture all the thoughts that were racing through her mind at the time and to articulate in hindsight things her 15-year-old self only intuited. The combination of self-analysis and sociological observation is almost Proustian; since the 500-page novel occupies only two months,

had Marivaux continued at that pace he might have written a novel as long as Proust's. The radical change in narrative time strikes anyone who reads French novels in historical sequence, as I've been doing, and the depth of Marianne's psychological analysis (of herself and others) leads me to agree with critic Oscar Haac's contention that it's Marivaux, rather than Lafayette, who truly "created the modern psychological novel" (69). With *Marianne* European fiction finally achieves the psychological maturity of the best medieval Japanese fiction.

As in *Pharsamond*, Marivaux toys with the fictional status of his project. Before Marianne pens her first letter, an unnamed narrator explains that he found her bundle of letters in the cupboard of a house he had just purchased; he guesses it was written 40 years earlier (i.e., around 1690). After sharing it with his friends, who urge him to publish it, he does so after changing a few names to protect their reputations. No sooner does Marianne begin writing than she admits, "I must confess this looks like the beginning of a romance; but it is not, I'll assure you" (8), maintaining the first narrator's pretense this is a nonfiction memoir. As a girl Marianne avidly read romances "*à la dérobée*" (in secret), and the 50-year-old narrator employs novelistic devices throughout the letters despite her protests that she is merely recording her memoirs. In one sense, the 15-year-old redhead created the first draft of this novel when she told her story to the English Miss Varthon, her uncorseted rival for Valville's flighty affections: "My story became interesting; I expressed myself in a language sublime and pathetic; I spoke like the victim of fortune, or the heroine of a romance, who, though she may say nothing but what is true, adorns that truth with everything that can render it moving" (267). Marivaux complicates things further in his preface to the second installment of the novel (which appeared two and a half years after the first), where he challenges readers who complained that Marianne's moral reflections in the first installment were out of place in a romance:

> My answer is, If you look upon Marianne's life as a romance, you are certainly in the right. In that case your criticism is just. There are then too many reflections in it, and it has not the form usually given to romances, or tales written only to amuse the reader. But Marianne did not in the least intend to write a romance. Her friend asks her for the history of her

> life, and she pens it in her own manner. Marianne has no scheme for making a book. She is no author, but only a thinking woman who has passed through a great variety of stations; whose life, in short, is a series of events which have given her a thorough knowledge of the human heart and of men's characters. When she relates her adventures, she fancies herself conversing with a friend, to whom she speaks or answers in a familiar manner. . . . Her style, if you please, is neither that of a romance nor that of a history. (1:52–53)

So, we have a novel written by a man that pretends to be an abandoned bundle of letters written by a woman who admits she portrays herself as "the heroine of a romance" which is denied by her creator who insists she/he's writing neither fiction nor history but something new. The point of all this metafictionality is to force readers to abandon their previous genre expectations and open themselves to a new mode of fiction. As Ioan Williams notes, "Behind this conception of fiction is a radically new conception of character which breaks clear away from anything previously attempted in fiction and informs the whole structure of [Marivaux's] work" (164).

In the same preface, Marivaux warns readers that in the next installment he would be dealing with lower-class characters in a realistic manner that might displease some. "But those that are more of a philosophic turn, and less deceived by the distinction which pride has established here below; those people, I say, will be glad to see what man is, in the character of a coachman, and what woman, in that of a little shopkeeper" (1:54). Sure enough, the slangy, comical shouting match between a coachman and Mme Dutour the linen-draper outraged readers accustomed to ladylike novels populated solely by genteel characters. Of course Marivaux wasn't the first to inject realism or lower-class characters into the French novel, but his commitment to realism permitted a character like ginger Marianne, who can be *both* an artful ingenue *and* a principled young lady. Most characters in early fiction are *either/or*; Marivaux knew that most people are *both/and*, combining good and bad qualities in varying degrees. Distancing herself from traditional novelists, Marianne writes near the beginning of her story, "They who would give us a picture of human nature very often describe what we should be rather than what we are, like the writers of modern

romances who, fond of everything that is marvelous, neglect nature and describe their hero as wanting even the foibles which we are unavoidably liable to. For a perfect character is a very unnatural one, and whatever these visionaries may think, those who speak from their own experiences are more likely to teach us the knowledge of ourselves than the dreams of these novelists" (22). One of the great evolutionary leaps in the history of the novel is this transition from "perfect" characters to more human ones, from flat characters to round ones, and Marivaux's principal characters are as round as Marianne's naked arm. Marianne/Marivaux further distance themselves from earlier novelists and assert their commitment to realistic characterization at the beginning of the eighth letter, where Marianne chides her correspondent (and Marivaux the reading public) for being surprised and angry at Valville's infidelity:

> I fancy that, instead of the life of your friend, you have insensibly brought yourself to believe you were reading a romance. And, this granted, there must be some reason for the violence of your indignation. What! An unfaithful romantic hero? Surely never was heard such a prodigy! It is an established rule that they all of them ought to be true, and it is on this account only that we interest ourselves in their concerns. . . .
>
> But infidelity is uncommon nowhere but in this visionary romantic world. I am here representing things as they really are, as the instability of all human things render them, and not the adventures of the brain which may be framed as we please; not a fictitious heart, but the heart of a man. (279)

Her earlier suggestion that one should read fiction for "knowledge of ourselves" rather than for a few hours' entertainment represents another leap, a repurposing of the novel. Regardless, that shouting match so outraged the critics that Marivaux temporarily abandoned the work and began writing *The Upstart Peasant* instead. But we're not yet ready to say So long, Marianne.

What Brooks calls Marianne's "lucid social consciousness" allows her to make some damning indictments against French society. Before Mme de Miran succumbs to Marianne's charms, she explains why she cannot

countenance a wedding, a remarkable passage in which she both condemns and kowtows to social convention:

> I myself should be charmed [to allow Marianne to marry her son] if the maxims of the world did not restrain me from acquiescing with it. For, alas, what is it you want [lack]? Neither beauty with all its most pleasing graces, the most sparkling wit, not the unaffected goodness of a great and upright soul. . . . But you have not twenty thousand *livres* a year. He would make no alliances in marrying you, nor do we know your relations, who, perhaps, would be an honor to us. The greatest part of mankind, my dear, have a superficial way of thinking, and consequently very false ideas;[120] they are dazzled with the splendor of riches and their ears tickled with the sound of titles, and yet to these I must give an account of my actions, to these who would never pardon the misfortunes you have suffered, which they would falsely term defects. Reason would certainly choose you for his wife, but an extravagant custom rejects you. (141)

It doesn't occur to her to reject "extravagant custom," and Marianne agrees; even after Mme de Miran changes her mind (she plans to deceive society into thinking Marianne is an acceptable country relation), Marianne nobly offers to withdraw after the extended Valville family voices their opposition to the marriage: "The world disdains, it rejects me; and, as we shall never be able to correct its prejudices, we must humor them" (253). She may feel that way, but not Marivaux: far from humoring the world's prejudices, he scores several hits against a ridiculous, rigid social structure that values family connections and social standing over individual merit, where an inbred coxcomb of noble blood is held in higher esteem than an intelligent, sensitive commoner. Bring on *la Révolution*! Marivaux, who moved in that upper-class world, notes that its superficial, false, prejudicial standards were maintained mostly by women.

Nonetheless, *Marianne* is a remarkable study in female sensibility; women dominate the novel, and there is special attention to alternative mother– daughter relationships, both in Marianne's story and in the nun's tale at the end. "How great, how interesting an adventure it is to find again an unknown mother," the nun gushes. "That very name carries in it

something inexpressibly delightful" (428). Mme de Miran means more to Marianne than her son ever does, and the nun's tale is essentially her failed search for a surrogate mother after her biological one abandoned her. (Since she warns Marianne against taking the veil, we can assume Mother Church isn't a satisfactory surrogate.) At times the novel reads like Mother's Day porn as Marianne weeps her eyes out again and again in gratitude to her "mamma" (as she calls Miran), though a cynic might suspect her daughterly tears are put to the same use around older women that her wardrobe malfunctions are around men. (An ocean of tears are shed in this sentimental novel; not only is *Marianne* as psychologically acute as a Japanese novel, it's just as wet.)

Though left unfinished, *The Life of Marianne* was immensely popular and influential, especially in England. Much scholarly ink has been spilled on the similarities between Marivaux's and Richardson's besieged 15-year-old charmers and the question of influence; the fact Richardson worked in the printing house that published the early installments of Lockman's translation in 1736, and may have even set the type, certainly suggests *Marianne* contributed to *Pamela* (1740). Fielding and Sterne were admirers —the slow, digressive pace at which Tristram Shandy tells his life story comically exaggerates Marianne's manner—and in Frances Burney's preface to her *Evelina* (1778) she includes Marivaux among those who saved the novel "from contempt, and rescued [it] from depravity." But like Challe's equally revolutionary *Illustrious French Lovers*, it fell out of favor at the end of the 18th century; *Marianne* was eventually rehabilitated in France, but in the English-reading world, this tear-stained milestone in the history of the novel remains criminally neglected.

Same with Marivaux's next best novel, *The Upstart Peasant* (*Le Paysan parvenu, ou les mémoires de M****, 1734–35); there's a good translation by Benjamin Boyce dating from 1974, but it was privately printed and hence is very scarce. This engaging memoir-novel, written and published in installments while *Marianne* was still in progress, is a masculine, bourgeois version of that feminine, aristocratic novel, and is likewise narrated decades later when the protagonist is socially and financially secure. A wine-grower's son named Jacob arrives in Paris around age 19, gets hired as a servant to a swinging married couple of the business class—the wife flirts with him, the husband tries to bribe him to marry a servant-girl so that he

can more conveniently see her on the side—then leaves their household after the financier dies suddenly. The bulk of the 210-page novel occurs over the next week as Jacob is hired by a repressed church lady in her late forties, marries her within a few days, and has flirtations with a few other older women. Jacob has just met the man who will make his fortune when the novel ends; again like *Marianne*, Marivaux didn't bother to finish it.

Jacob is an outgoing, open-hearted lad and isn't threatened by Paris as Marianne is, largely because he quickly adapts to its ways and is happy to respond to any woman who takes an interest in him. He's a bit of a gigolo just as Marianne is a bit of a coquette, but spares himself the moral dilemmas she entangles herself in, largely because *male* chastity isn't an issue, nor does he have any inborn aristocratic promptings to obey. The peasant succeeds because he takes life as it is, not as it should be. (Marivaux gives no indication of whether we should approve or disapprove of this attitude; the "parvenu" of the title had not yet become a slur and merely indicated a self-made man.) One doesn't suspect the older Jacob is doctoring this account of his younger self, as one does with Marianne; either he's as sincere as he repeatedly claims to be—sincerity in fact is his defining feature—or he's too cunning for us.

Marivaux provides more examples of rounded characters who are *both/and*, especially older female characters who are both pious and sensual. (Scorn for religious hypocrisy is another similarity between *Marianne* and this novel.) As Jacob says to one of these cougars, "One is what one is, and that's not the world's affair; after all, what does one do in this life? a little good, a little bad, now one, now the other; one does as one can . . ." (137–38). Marivaux attains new heights of realism in characterization and dialogue, and allows Jacob to deflate the very sentimentality he was simultaneously inflating in *Marianne* when it comes to love: "one doesn't need tenderness to love people," Jacob tells us, unknowing evoking Scudéry's key term: "There are amours in which the heart has no share; there are, indeed, more of that kind than of any other, and it is basically by these that nature rolls along, not by our delicacies of sentiment that do not serve her at all. It is we usually who render ourselves tender in order to give grace to our passions, but it is nature that makes us amorous; we accept from her the experience which we embellish with gentility; I speak thus of sentiment; however, one seldom embellishes it

anymore; that fashion has rather disappeared at the time I am writing" (182). Would that it were true: sentimental fiction became even more popular as the 18th century progressed, but Jacob's unsentimental acknowledgment of the sex drive is refreshing and frees Marivaux's amorous characters from charges of immorality. Although there are a few hot scenes of extreme flirting, the novel isn't lascivious, and in fact at one point Marivaux inserts a two-page critique of that quality in a novel by Crébillon (whom we'll get to shortly), who had parodied *Marianne* in a racy novel called *The Skimmer* (1734). Sex is natural, Jacob insists, and shouldn't be sentimentally sweetened or coarsely dirtied.

The Upstart Peasant is an early example of the "young man from the provinces" genre that would become more popular as novelists abandoned aristocratic characters for more ordinary folk. Jacob isn't corrupted by the big city, nor does his homespun wisdom triumph over metropolitan sophistication as in some examples of the genre. As Greene notes, "He is neither hero nor anti-hero. He is that extraordinary paradox, an ordinary man" (193), which was still a novelty in fiction at this time. Marianne is an extraordinary girl, and *Marianne* a superior novel, but *The Upstart Peasant* is remarkable for its very ordinariness: its ordinary characters speaking ordinary dialogue and behaving in ordinary ways make it extraordinary.

It's a shame the author didn't finish it; the novel ends with a promise for a sixth installment of Jacob's memoirs, but Marivaux returned to *Marianne* and never fulfilled his promise. In 1743 he was admitted to the French Academy (largely due to the influence of the real-life counterpart to Marianne's benefactress) and he gave up fiction completely, leaving behind one of the most diverse bodies of novels from any writer.

The memoir-novel was also the favored form of the other almost-famous French novelist of this period, Antoine François Prévost (1697–1763). He's usually referred to as Abbé Prévost because technically he was a priest, though he certainly didn't act like one. Torn between the incompatible attractions of the sacred and secular worlds, he spent his youth bouncing back and forth between the novitiate and the army, unable to decide between the tranquility of the cloister and the excitement of the outside world. A failed love affair in his early twenties drove him back to the monastery—which he likened to a "tomb"—where he worked on theological projects; but unable to resist the call of the wild, he

simultaneously began writing a romantic novel, the first four installments of which appeared in 1728. That year, he left his monastery without permission, which resulted in a warrant for his arrest, so he fled to England, converted to Anglicanism, got work as a tutor, began writing a second novel, became secretly engaged to his student, got fired, fled to Holland, added a theatrical "d'Exiles" to his surname, wrote and published the final three installments of his first novel—which caused a scandal—then became obsessed with a disreputable adventuress named Lenki Eckhardt who bankrupted him, which led him to commit forgery and get arrested. He then snuck back to France, managed to get papal absolution for his apostasy, rejoined a monastery but kept up an active social life and continued writing novels, even though his superiors forbade him from publishing. Further financial problems (he had hooked up again with leeching Lenki) and threats of imprisonment caused him to flee France again, and it wasn't until he was in his forties that the renegade priest finally settled down back in France, concentrated on writing nonfiction and translations (including Richardson's later novels), and attained a modicum of respectability.

Prévost decided to make his wild oscillations between the sacred and secular realms, between religious calm and profane passion, the subject of his first significant novel, *Memoirs of a Man of Quality Who Has Withdrawn from the World* (*Mémoirs et aventures d'un homme de qualité qui s'est retiré du monde*, 1728–31).[121] It purports to be the memoirs of a high-principled man named Renoncour who has retired to a monastery after a tumultuous life (books 1–2), then is talked out of retirement to accompany a young nobleman on a European tour, another tumultuous experience that sends Renoncour back to the monastery for good (books 3–6). Book 7, the famous *Manon Lescaut*, recounts a tragic story Renoncour heard during the events of book 5. Over the course of the *Man of Quality*'s 700 pages, Prévost scores many palpable hits: he undermines the moral code maintained by the French aristocracy (the "quality" of the title) and questions its rigid social structure; he slyly slanders their god by way of praising him; introduces new character types (the melancholic solitaire, the femme fatale) and new modes (Gothicism, Romanticism, decadence) to the French novel; complicates the reliability of narrators and reader expectations; deromanticizes the idea of love at first sight; discredits the

moral value of literature; defends England against French prejudice; and last as well as least, sets part of his novel in New Orleans, its first appearance in fiction.

Prévost stages a number of dichotomies—reason versus passion, tranquility versus activity, social duty versus personal inclination, books versus life—and shows how hard it is to reconcile the socially approved first halves of those pairings with the instinctive appeal of the second. They are irreconcilable differences, and *The Man of Quality* is the tragedy of a man who fails to reconcile himself to those differences. Before Prévost exposes the Marquis de Renoncour for the inhuman, blinkered, hypocritical character he is, the author wins the reader's sympathy for this man of constant sorrows. The son of a couple that defied their parents by eloping and were disinherited as a result, the 17-year-old Renoncour no sooner reconciles his grandfather to his wayward father than his mother and sister die, sending his father to a monastery. (As in other novels of the period, the cloister offers an escape from the world; it's more an asylum for those who can't cope than a religious retreat, and a holding pen to keep girls out of trouble until they're old enough to marry.) The gloomy teen goes to Paris to further his education, and after a lonely period meets a fellow solitaire, who recounts the first of the novel's many embedded *histoires*, most of which concern the "violent passions" of young love and which invariably involve subterfuge, crime, murder, unhappiness, and/or suicide. Disinherited by his evil stepmother, Renoncour drifts through Europe for several years before getting captured and becoming a slave to a Turk. Now in his mid-thirties, he falls for a Turkish girl half his age whom he is tutoring and elopes with her to Italy. They are happy for a while and have a child (though they don't marry until later), but after his wife dies of a fever he buries himself in solitude in a room hung with black curtains, weeping daily before a shrine he erects to her. Eventually he returns to France, only to learn his father has died; after his 15-year-old daughter elopes just as he and his father did, Renoncour renounces the world and retires to a monastery at age 50 to write the memoirs we've just read.

Had Prévost stopped there, at the end of book 2, Renoncour would be a sympathetic character whose retreat from life would be understandable given all his disappointments. He anticipates the Byronic hero, the solitary sensitive soul suffering capital-R Romantic agony, as well as the Poëtic

melancholic who finds morose delectation in brooding on his dead love in theatrical, Gothic surroundings. (He keeps his wife's heart in a casket, and feels the tell-tale heart commiserates with him.) His dignified retreat recalls that of the heroine of *The Princess de Clèves*—one of his favorite novels, he tells us later. But when he returns to the world a few years later to chaperone the Marquis de Rosemont on his European tour, he begins to alienate us with his incessant moralizing and his insistence that young love is a poison to be avoided until one's parents can arrange a suitable match. Despite the fact Renoncour is the son of a couple that eloped and lived happily for years, despite his passionate love for his Turksih student, despite the alternative customs he observes during his travels, the older Renoncour has become the old-maidish advocate of an antiquated code of manners at odds with human nature. Like Nick Carraway after that unpleasantness at East Egg, he wants the world to be "at a sort of moral attention forever." Blocking his spirited young charge's sincere affection for two admirable young women, first in Spain and later back in France, Renoncour causes nothing but misery for Rosemont, the ladies who love him, and even for himself when he rejects the honest advances of an Englishwoman whom he had helped escape from an abusive husband. Book 6 ends with everyone either dead, miserable, or in a convent.

And yet, the alternative to Renoncour's rigor is equally bad. Virtually every instance of young lovers who follow their heart in the novel—and the novel is full of them, culminating in the most extreme example in book 7—ends in disaster, apparently justifying society's strict rules to avoid such misalliances. There is only one example of a suitor who follows the rules: While in England, Renoncour and Rosemont hear the story of a Swedish diplomat who patiently courts a Miss Perry with passions in check, and who, anxious "to forestall any accusations of imprudence and precipitation" (5/142), scrupulously restricts himself to acts and testimonies of friendship and esteem until he can conclude a socially sanctioned marriage. Miss Perry is lucky; in Italy Renoncour witnessed a case where a girl of 14 or 15 is engaged to a "deformed wretch" who happens to be rich, which "blinded the parents to all other considerations." Blinded herself, "this poor young creature ran to her intended husband with the same ardor as if she had been entering into the highest state of happiness" (2/1:166–67). Among persons of Renoncour and Rosemont's social rank, marriages were usually

economic alliances, “where beauty, youth, and merit were sacrificed to riches,” as in this case, resulting in bland, loveless marriages. Renoncour is shocked at the Italian girl’s situation, yet later he unquestioningly supports the very system that encourages such alliances. Rosemont feels trapped by that system, wishing at one point he were a peasant rather than a “man of quality” so that he could follow his heart. Prévost dramatizes a damned-if-you-do, damned-if-you-don’t social structure that could drive anyone to a monastery. And he knew that his readers would be torn between supporting society’s rules—the courtship of Miss Perry is proper but boring—and rooting for the young lovers—whose affairs are reckless but thrilling—forcing them to confront the legitimacy of their marriage customs.

Renoncour is convinced his god supports the social structure of early modern Europe and refers to him often, inadvertently exposing him as a puritanical tyrant. In the beginning, Renoncour associates Adam’s fall with “extraordinary passions” (1/1:5) and is convinced his god continues to smite anyone who eats of the poisoned apple of love. (“Poison” is Renoncour’s favorite metaphor for passion.) Consequently, after experiencing a few years of illegal but satisfying love, Renoncour has a premonition of his wife’s sudden death:

> Heaven laughed at my cares and was preparing for me an abyss of misery into which I was to be plunged, and from which I was never to rise.
>
> It is certain that man, having received from heaven life and whatever else he possesses in this world, the same being that bestowed them can take them away at his pleasure, without any imputation of injustice. The creator exercises an absolute power over whatever he has created; if he allows us the transitory enjoyment of them, it is always reserving to himself the right of disposing them as he sees proper. No one can doubt of these truths. (2/1:167)

Throughout the novel, the creator regularly exercises his power like a sadist, to whom Renoncour submits with kiss-the-whip masochism. We should “adore the hand by which afflictions come” he says immediately after this premonition, and following a later scene of murder and mayhem, Renoncour cries out, “O heaven! how adorably awful are thy dispensations!

If thou hast any further strokes in reserve, let them fall upon me and close my wretched life!" (6/2:174). Heaven does indeed give him a few more strokes, by which point the reader has difficulty taking him or his tyrannical master seriously. During book 6, several worldly characters tease him for his unworldly beliefs, Rosemont turns on him and curses him as a "barbarian, brute, a man without humanity or goodness, whose conduct and principles were quite inconsistent" (6/2:199), and he is even mocked by a sassy 16-year-old girl who has escaped a convent to join her lover. Certain to the end "that the severities of self-denial and mortification will be recompensed with a higher reward" (6/2:210), Renoncour crawls back to his monastery a broken, ridiculous man, even though he exemplifies the highest ideals of the French aristocracy and Catholicism. The novel is thus a devastating critique of both. Complicating theological matters—and Prévost complicates everything—is the tendency of his characters to blame fate or their "evil stars" for their catastrophes, equating the Catholic god with pagan Fortune and astrology, even with the Greek Furies.[122]

The futility of moral instruction contributes to Renoncour's failure, a surprising theme coming from Prévost, since he was both a preacher and a writer at a time when novels were expected to blend "profit and pleasure, at once delighting and instructing the reader," as Horace put it, the classical authority cited by all defenders of the novel back then.[123] Echoing the Roman poet, Renoncour hopes "both to divert and improve the public" with his memoirs (3/1:189), but Prévost undercuts him by littering his pages with references to edifying books that are ignored when they are most needed. As a student, Renoncour visits Dominique Bouhours—a Jesuit priest and scholar (1628–1702); the novel contains many real-life people, including Racine and Molière—and confesses he likes to read books on morality, but "whenever I come to apply them to practice, I find unsurmountable difficulties" (1/1:67). Part of the problem is that these books are unrealistic, like the heroic romances Renoncourt unsurprisingly prefers over the more realistic novels of Scarron and Furetière (3/1:239—not named but implied); his favorite novel is Fénelon's *Telemachus*, a preachy novel filled with idealistic schemes and impossibly high moral standards. Renoncour certainly has his hands full with his own Telemachus, young Rosemont: after the death of a Spanish lady he fell for, Rosemont outdoes his mentor's

theatrical mourning by wearing her clothes, "which were metamorphosed into waistcoats and a nightgown, which he wore in the morning" (4/2:45–46). En route to Holland, he then falls for a 14-year-old boy, which earns him a shocked lecture on the "vicious passion" of homosexuality (4/2:76), though it's later revealed this is not only a girl in disguise, but Renoncour's Turkish niece Nadine. (Prévost had a weakness for heroic-romance coincidences.) The other unsurmountable difficulty of applying moral theory to practice is the egotistical exceptionalism most people possess, especially uncoachable teenagers convinced their experiences are totally unlike anyone else's in life or literature.

Like almost everything in the *Man of Quality*, this idea appears in its most concentrated form in part 7 of the novel, the wild-at-heart *Story of the Chevalier des Grieux and Manon Lescaut.*[124] Prévost evidently intended to end the novel with book 6, after the 60-year-old Renoncour retreats to the monastery; but a stroke of inspiration led him to add a coda to his long novel, and in six weeks he mounted his most powerful argument yet that young love conducted outside social boundaries is a form of madness that can only end in ruin or death. Renoncour listens in sympathetic silence as the desolate young Des Greiux tells him how, as a naïve 17-year-old who had never paid attention to the opposite sex, he encountered a 15-year-old hottie whose parents were locking her up in a convent, "doubtless to check that bent towards pleasure that had already declared itself" (13). Falling in lust at first sight with this juvenile delinquent, "I found myself suddenly aflame to the pitch of ecstasy and madness" (12); sizing him up as an easy mark, the party girl agrees to ditch her escort and run away with him, and on the road to Paris they begin fucking like bunnies. They keep at it after holing up in a furnished room in Paris, but when their money runs low after three weeks, Manon begins fucking a rich tax-collector behind Des Grieux's back. (Pardon my French, but such language is necessary to properly convey her character, which, like Don Quixote's, has been unduly romanticized over the centuries; her counterpart today would be a teenage stripper with a kid who milks a rich bible-college student.) Des Grieux is devastated by her betrayal, but from her lower-class perspective she's simply taking care of business, an attitude that would make sense to Marivaux's upstart peasant and *Marianne*'s linen-draper. Virtue is a luxury

people of their class can't afford. All the other misalliances in the *Man of Quality* are between members of the upper classes; this is the only case where a member of "quality" breaks rank to consort with a commoner, adding class conflict to the complete novel's other irreconcilable differences.[125] (Renoncour and Rosemont encounter prostitutes in Spain and England, but they don't dream of responding to them, even as a lark.) Des Grieux's family tracks him down and rescues him from the gold-digger, who keeps banging the tax-collector while he cools his heels under house arrest. Confined there for six months, he ironically passes the time writing "a lover's commentary of the fourth book of the *Aeneid*: . . . it was of a heart such as mine that faithful Dido had need" (38), all the while plotting to return to his faithless Manon.

He eventually forgets her and attends a seminary, achieves some fame as an outstanding student, and thus attracts the return of Manon, now 18, who puts on a big act that fools Des Grieux into cohabiting with her again. Thereafter, her flighty craving for luxury and pleasure sends the young man into a downward spiral of card-sharping and grifting; he gets involved with Manon's shifty brother and his thuggish friends; a failed attempt to sell Manon's ass to a rich old man lands them in jail, followed by further crimes (including murder) and a third betrayal (Christ's score) until Manon is sentenced to be deported to Louisiana with a pack of other prostitutes. (America was Europe's dumping ground for criminals and undesirables at this time.) 'Whipped Des Grieux follows her to Louisiana, where they live together until further troubles force them to flee New Orleans for the wilderness. There, in a conclusion that is unrealistic and egregiously melodramatic, Manon dies and Des Grieux nearly dies of grief, but is rescued by a friend (whom he had lied to and cheated) and taken back to France, a broken man of 22 whose father has just died.[126]

Renoncour is speechless, and says nothing in response to this shocking story. But by the time he writes a preface to the work, his initial sympathy for Des Grieux has soured into abhorrence: "I have to paint a blind young man who turns his back on happiness to plunge of his own free will into the worst misfortunes: who with all the qualities that go to form the brightest merit, chooses an obscure and vagabond life in preference to all the advantages of fortune and of nature: who foresees his misfortunes without

wishing to avoid them; . . . in short, an ambiguous character, a mixture of virtues and vices, a perpetual contrast of good sentiments and bad actions" (lvi). And Prévost paints it black, going farther than Challe—from whom he apparently took the unusual name Manon, though she acts more like Des Frans's Silvie—in the use of sordid realism, especially money problems, and farther than Marivaux in plumbing his protagonist's psychology. Since Des Grieux is telling the story, he tries to justify his actions by portraying Manon in the best light, and it's fascinating to listen to his convoluted reasoning as he tries to explain away her various betrayals and convince himself that she's anything but a conniving slut, all of which reveals more about him than her. "She was some time thinking out her reply" (172) he tells us when he asks Manon to explain why she sent him a pretty prostitute to fuck in her place while she was out turning another trick;[127] he accepts her contrived explanation, but by then sharp readers know better, because Prévost has taught us to be better readers.

This marks an important turning point in the author–reader relationship. Readers have a tendency to trust and sympathize with narrators, but it quickly becomes apparent that Des Grieux is slanting his tale in Manon's favor while trying to convince Renoncour (and himself) that he's giving an accurate account of their affair. Prévost reinforces this formally by having Renoncour interrupt Des Grieux's narrative to break for supper, by which point the reader may be totally caught up in the mesmerizing story, to remind us that this is a not an impartial report and to put us back on our guard. Prévost was not the first to use an unreliable narrator—we've had them at least since *Lazarillo of Tormes*, if not earlier—but he requires the reader to pay closer attention than usual to Des Grieux's account, sifting it for tip-offs like that "some time thinking out her reply," in order to strip Manon of the romantic trappings he projects upon her and to hold him responsible for his self-destructive actions. Like Renoncour, like Rosemont, Des Grieux blames his evil star and/or malignant heaven for his self-inflicted tragedy—he concludes his god killed Manon to teach him a lesson!—and like them fails to learn from the moral guidance provided by his friends and favorite authors. (His case is *different*, you see; Manon is different from other girls, and no previous examples apply to their unique case of undying love!) Ironically, no sooner did Prévost send his manuscript

to the printers than *he* fell for an adventuress like Manon, one who bled him dry for a decade as he committed petty crimes and alienated his friends for her sake. Des Grieux had his callow youth as an excuse; Prévost was in his thirties and had just written a 700-page novel warning against the same reckless passion he now embraced. So much for literature's potential to instruct.

His foolishness was seconded by later readers of *Manon Lescaut*, who made a romantic heroine out of the guffawing airhead—during one of their scams, Des Grieux complains that Manon "was several times on the verge of spoiling all by her bursts of laughter" (90)—and who made her the tragic star of operas, ballets, and films. (*The Story of the Chevalier des Grieux and Manon Lescaut* eventually was shortened to *Manon* in some of these, giving her solo billing.) In literature, she became the patron saint of courtesans with a heart of gold, and an alluring femme fatale: the narrator of Dumas's *Lady of the Camellias* dotes on *Manon Lescaut*, and it is included in Lord Henry's decadent library in Wilde's *Picture of Dorian Gray*. Picking up on Des Grieux's humiliating devotion to Manon even after she has repeatedly betrayed him, the protagonist of Sacher-Masoch's *Venus in Furs* perceptively recognizes him as a fellow masochist. That's more like it, for the divavication of Manon by the others misses the point; although she eventually seems to regard Des Grieux as something more than an ATM machine in a doublet, the lady is a tramp. (*Manon Lescaut* is the alluring one, not Manon Lescaut.) Nor should we romanticize her lover as a devoted martyr to passion; as Montesquieu put it bluntly, it's the story of "a scoundrel and a whore."[128]

The Story of the Chevalier des Grieux and Manon Lescaut is a brilliant conclusion to *Memoirs of a Man of Quality*, for it condenses the long novel's main themes into an unforgettable finale and leaves its dichotomies unresolved in modernist ambiguity. But it's a shame it has overshadowed the longer novel that contains it, as well as Prévost's other novels. He broke off writing the *Man of Quality* to begin another long novel on the same theme, *The English Philosopher, or the Story of Mr. Cleveland* (*Le Philosophe anglais, ou Histoire de Monsieur Cleveland*, 1731–32, 1738–39: this too was interrupted halfway through by the easily distracted author). This huge novel expands on Renoncour's difficulty of applying the

theory of moral philosophy to actual practice in a world populated by people who don't care a fig for virtue and rationality. Here, Prévost literalizes the search for wisdom by sending his hard-luck protagonist halfway around the world and back in search of a workable philosophy that guarantees happiness and certainty, adapting the conventions of the adventure novel to the philosophical investigations he and other members of the Enlightenment were pursuing at this time. Prévost takes over 1,000 lugubrious pages to accomplish what Voltaire did in the sprightly, 100-page *Candide*, yet *Cleveland* has some points of interest.

Cleveland is the bastard son of Oliver Cromwell (who is portrayed as a real bastard in the colloquial sense) via one of King Charles I's former mistresses; disgusted with the world, Mrs. Cleveland rears her boy in isolation, giving him a thorough education in stoical philosophy. Growing up in a cavern in Devonshire, young Cleveland doesn't develop any social skills until one day he encounters another set of cave-dwellers also in hiding from Cromwell, Lord Axminster and his 10-year-old daughter Fanny. After Cleveland's mother dies when he is 17—the same age at which Renoncour lost his—they all escape to France, where Cleveland discovers two things: his love for tween Fanny, and the limits of his mother's philosophy, which was fine for someone living in a cave but not for one moving in society. Axminster takes over as mentor, the first of many as this young Telemachus grows up—Fénelon's novel remains a presiding spirit—and is forced to reevaluate and readjust his worldview as he encounters things undreamt of in his mother's philosophy. Like Renoncourt, and like many Romantic heroes to come, Cleveland believes he is more sensitive than most people, and is in fact something of a drama queen. He suffers a near unbelievable series of betrayals and setbacks in both Europe and America until he abandons his mother's pagan stoicism for patriarchal Christianity back home in England, near the caves where his pursuit of philosophy began.

Over the course of the novel, Prévost examines a variety of philosophical and religious viewpoints—stoicism, deism, primitivism, utopianism, and competing brands of Christianity—usually to expose their insufficiencies. Near the end, as an advisor to England's Charles II, Cleveland finds it particularly frustrating to apply pure philosophy to dirty politics. Though Cleveland regards his ultimate conversion to Protestantism as a victory

(Prévost converted around the time he was writing this), the skeptical author drops enough hints that this is more a concession to the limits of one's understanding, if not an admission of defeat. Cleveland had earlier complained that institutional religion "requires simplicity and submission" (3:46); the fact he finally finds tranquility near the cave where his mother is buried suggests a return to the womb, that tranquil state where one is untroubled by philosophy. And the fact this is a first-person memoir, not a more objective third-person account, once again puts us on guard against a potentially unreliable narrator, especially one who admits upfront that writing his memoirs is a form of therapy: "nothing can be a greater consolation to a troubled mind than the liberty of venting its sorrows. A miserable person idolizes his grief as much as a happy man does his pleasures" (1:2). Often claiming he is "the most unhappy man that ever lived" (2:140), Cleveland exaggerates what others with a conventional upbringing simply accept as the ways of the world. His isolated upbringing skews his vision, a clever ploy on Prévost's part because Cleveland's early encounters with civilized living in France enstranges the reader's perception (as Shklovsky would say) and helps us see, with him, how it actually works.

But instead of learning from this initial culture-clash, Cleveland unthinkingly imposes the same corrupt European culture on the "savages" he meets on the dark continent of America. Traveling there in pursuit of Fanny and her father, who have abandoned him due to a misunderstanding, Cleveland soon finds himself in a position of power among the Abaquis tribe. First thing he does is try to clothe the naked savages in conformity to uptight European standards of modesty—though he later thinks better of this—then imposes a patriarchal hierarchy on what was a communal society and tricks them into abandoning their visible sun god for the invisible son his tribe believes in by secretly murdering one of the Indians, proclaiming it an act of his god, and threatening more violence if they don't convert. Prévost's most ludicrous example of European prejudice has to do with "modesty," a concept unknown to the Indians, who aren't ashamed of the body. Always one step behind Fanny as he searches the Americas for her, Cleveland finally bumps into Fanny and her father in the Carolinas, where they have been taken captive; her clothes were stolen, so she's wearing a grass skirt and some cast-off European pieces, but her father keeps Cleveland waiting until nightfall before he can see her "in order to spare

[her] blushes" (2:43), even though the devoted swain has traveled over 5,000 miles to see a girl he has known since she was 10. Although he doesn't regard the Indians as "noble" savages, it occasionally occurs to him that their lack of some European habits are not necessarily so savage. After returning to Europe and "civilization," Cleveland concludes, "I perhaps have seen more injustice and dissoluteness among Christians than in the countries inhabited by savages" (3:164).

Cleveland is a studious scholar, but repeated shocks to his system of philosophy frustrate his attempts to apply what he learns in the library to the world outside. *Cleveland* is a novel about the limits of philosophy, or rather of the difficulty of forging a new philosophical worldview (as many were during the Enlightenment) while still operating under old assumptions and errors like European exceptionalism and the existence of a god. Cleveland's failed social experiment in America—the Abaquis are ruined under his colonization—is one of several utopian schemes in the novel, all of which fail because their leaders can't reconcile passionate individualism with rational order, and hence fall back on isolationism, patriarchy, and repression, using many of the same persecuting tactics Catholics were using against Protestants at this period in the 17th century, and which drive many aspects of the novel's plot.

Prévost adulterates the high-minded novel's philosophical concerns with some lowbrow sensationalism: there are shipwrecks, pirates, abductions, rapes, incredible coincidences, titillation—Fanny is stripped of her clothes by "naked" savages, Cleveland almost has sex with a girl who turns out to be his long-lost daughter, whom he thought was roasted and eaten alive by Indians—disguises, murders, suicides, wily Jesuits, Indian ambushes, cannibalism, and an endless torrent of tears. Especially shocking is the sequence in which Cleveland debates suicide with himself, Hamlet-wise, and concludes the *rational* thing to do per his current philosophy would be not only to kill himself but his two sons as well, in order to spare them from living in a fallen world, and he actually draws a sword on them before coming to his senses.[129] Prévost wasn't the first to mix serious philosophy with melodramatic adventure, but *Cleveland* does reveal his conception of the utility of novels such as his. Near the end, the priggish protagonist reads

some novels for the first time in his life (which the villainous Jesuit had recommended to him), and gives them a scathing review:

> I dipped a little into them all, but did not find that above two or three at most were any ways rational. A few ingenious thoughts, a happy turn of expression, some soft or smiling images; such were the weapons the Jesuit offered me to drive away the remembrance of my pains. However, after I had looked into these pieces for about a quarter of an hour, I threw them from me with the utmost indignation. Heavens, says I, does he sport with my sorrows! To imagine that it is possible for me to be comforted by such trifling amusements as these is the highest insult. (3:38)

Perhaps recording his own dissatisfaction with mainstream fiction during his melancholy twenties, Prévost wrote a novel that an intellectual could read without feeling insulted, and one that offered a more realistic assessment of life than idealistic books of philosophy and theology. On the other hand, Prévost struggled somewhat with the limitations of the memoir-novel form he chose to adopt. *Cleveland* contains many self-conscious remarks by the author on why he is writing the way he is; he is trying something different, but (he admits) not different enough:

> I consult my own grief much more than I do the laws of history [fiction] and the rules which are prescribed to biographers. How numerous soever and various my misfortunes may be, they now act altogether upon my heart; the sensation which now remains to me of them is not the effect of variety; ’tis now, if I may so express myself, but a uniform mass of sorrow which oppresses me continually with its weight. I therefore should be glad were it in the power of my pen to unite in one stroke of it the several calamities of my life in the same manner as their effect is united in my soul. Then the reader would be much better able to form a judgment of the state of it. Regularity and order are a constraint to me, and as I am not able to represent all my misfortunes at one view, the greatest present themselves with the strongest force to my memory. . . . (2:160–61)

Manon Lescaut had already demonstrated Prévost's ability to write a powerfully compact work, and had he followed that example, *Cleveland* might resemble a dense, "uniform mass of sorrow" like Dostoevsky's *Notes from Underground*. But he needed the extra money publishers paid for multivolume works, so he went for "the effect of variety."

In 1735, Prévost put *Cleveland* on hold to publish the first volume of yet another huge memoir-novel, *The Dean of Coleraine* (*Le Doyen de Killerine*, 1735–40), yet another dramatization of the conflict between theory and practice, the ideal and the real. In this one, a celibate Irish cleric needs to find suitable spouses for his three lively siblings, which involves the same contradiction between duty and desire Renoncour struggled with. Though the dean, like the man of quality and Cleveland, has "a hatred for the world and a taste for solitude" (1:7), he is more practical than they are and contents himself with "all those rules of religion that are reconcilable with the customs and maxims of the world" (preface), rather than insist on impossibly high ideals, and hence manages to marry his siblings off satisfactorily. The most startling thing about the novel is the physical appearance of the dean; he admits he's no beauty:

> I was born with three defects, from which all the application and remedies of art could not set me free. My legs were bowed and crooked, and bore no bad resemblance in shape to the two crotchets of a parenthesis; yet they were strong and robust enough, and of an equal length not to be any impediment to my walking upright. To add to this infirmity, I had a bunch on my back, and a counterpoise of the same sort and bulk before; and to complete my disgrace, my face was disfigured by two large warts regularly planted above my eyes, which spreading on my forehead appeared like two horns; add to this that my head was exceeding large, my waist full, thick, bundled together, and extremely short: in fine, my whole figure seemed to destine and mark me out for some other state than the world, where raillery much less spares the imperfections of the body than the vices and irregularities of the soul. (1:7–8)

In a genre where the protagonist is always physically attractive and only villains are ugly, this was a bold choice on Prévost's part. It's tempting, but

too easy, to argue that the dean's hideousness makes him a suitable spokesman for his defective Catholic creed; Richard Smernoff is probably right to find "that a quiet dignity emerges from this physically deformed clergyman who enjoins men to accept imperfection" (94), as opposed to the handsome protagonists of Prévost's earlier novels who renounce the world because it's not perfect. But another 700-page novel on the limits of reason and the violence of passion sounds redundant, and Prévost admits in his preface that it's merely entertainment, not art. ("As the state of my fortune does not permit me to write on subjects that require time and tranquillity, I confine myself to those that are the most simple, the most virtuous, and the most agreeable.") So let's move on, especially since this chapter is growing so lengthy the reader may suspect the French Ministry of Culture is paying me by the word.

Of the half-dozen other novels Prévost cranked out, there is one more worth looking at, the finest thing he wrote after *Manon Lescaut*. Like it a short novel in two parts, *The Story of a Modern Greek Woman* (*Histoire d'une grecque moderne*, 1740) concerns an unnamed French diplomat stationed in Constantinople who falls for a 16-year-old harem girl, a Greek Christian named Théophé. Buying her freedom and taking her under his wing for what he insists are humanitarian reasons, he tries to mold Théophé into his dreamgirl—as virtuous as the Princess de Clèves but as affectionate as a former sex slave—while she attempts to reinvent herself as a modern, independent woman. Naturally, these incompatible goals cause friction, and not the kind of friction he desires. (He claims his initial interest in her was nonsexual, but soon he itches to Turk her Bosporus.) Wanting a mentor, not a lover, she rejects his advances, so they settle into a perverse father–daughter relationship, but his unrequited love for her remains. They return to France, where she suggests solving their emotional conundrum by joining a convent, which he refuses to allow. Then, like Manon Lescaut, she unexpectedly dies young, leaving the diplomat to pen this sad memoir.

Like Des Grieux, the diplomat controls the narrative, but Théophé is given many more lines than Manon and is allowed to explain herself at greater length, which paradoxically makes her even more enigmatic than the French tart. Abducted from her possibly noble Greek family at age two, raised by an amoral scoundrel, Théophé began engaging in sex "at an age when I did not yet know the difference between the sexes," she tells the

diplomat. “You see that a taste for pleasure had no part in my misfortune and that I did not fall into licentiousness but was born into it. Thus, I experienced neither shame nor remorse for it.”[130] Years later, at age 15, she deliberately sold herself into a seraglio because it seemed the quickest way to attain a life of luxury. The diplomat is both shocked and titillated by her amoral upbringing; the latter will lead him to expect sexual favors from her, but first he introduces her to European shame and remorse by lecturing her on Christian virtues and reading to her from ascetic Jansenist treatises. In an almost comic way, this backfires on him; performing a kind of cultural clitoridectomy that curtails Théophé’s sexual desire, he realizes he went too far and tries to reverse the procedure by having her read romance novels like *Cleopatra* and *The Princess de Clèves*, whose severely virtuous heroines only make Théophé feel even more guilty about her promiscuous past. He realizes too late he has crippled Théophé with guilt, unlike those “who were raised for their condition [as harem girls] and who do not feel the humiliation of their lot” (645). Like Cleveland among the Indians, the diplomat has an inkling that a guilt-free upbringing consistent with nature might be superior to a straitjacketed European one at odds with it, and that cultural relativism trumps what he regards as universal values of virtue, but he’s too committed to his own cultural conditioning to break free from it. He sickens and becomes an invalid during the last part of the novel, and then Théophé mysteriously dies, as if Christian European culture is literally bad for one’s health.

It’s a fascinating portrait of a man broadminded enough to recognize the provincialism of his conventional upbringing, but unable to rise above it. As a diplomat in Turkey, he is used to negotiating with foreign powers, but he is powerless to negotiate a satisfying relationship with this young foreigner. He claims to be a man of the world who practices “enlightened libertinism” (609), but he confesses this 16-year-old girl has become “so formidable to me that I no longer approached her without trembling” (665). The sex slave he freed from the seraglio now holds him in submission, inadvertently sending him into fits of rage and jealousy. (At one point, at the height of sexual frustration, the diplomat fires off canons to celebrate his king’s birthday in defiance of the local authorities; paging Dr. Freud.) The student he taught moral principles becomes more principled than he is. Prévost

handles these psychological twists and turns with great aplomb, and effectively dramatizes the power a captivating young girl can have on an older man. This novel is his most writerly text, and the diplomat warns us in the opening paragraph to be prepared to read critically: “Will I not incur suspicion by the confession that forms my exordium? I am the lover of the beautiful Greek woman whose story I am undertaking. Who will think me sincere in the recital of my pleasures or my pains? Who will not mistrust my descriptions and my praise? Will not a violent passion cause everything that passes before my eyes or through my hands to change its nature? In a word, what faithfulness will one expect from a pen guided by love? These are the questions that must keep a reader on his guard” (553–54). Consequently, we never do learn whether Théophé is descended from Greek nobility or is just a resourceful girl of the streets, whether she honestly wishes for for solitary independence (as she claims) or is cheating behind the diplomat’s back (as he suspects). There is no resolution, only the narrator’s admittance at the end that he remains disturbed “with suspicions that I was never able to clear up,” turning them over to us: “It is here that I yield absolutely to the judgment of my difficulties to the reader, and I leave it to him to form whatever opinion he must of all that may have appeared to him obscure or uncertain in Théophé’s character and conduct” (710–11). Unlike Des Grieux, who thought he understood Manon and couched his confession accordingly, the diplomat—an older, wiser man—simply tells us what he knows and lets us decide. (Personally, I trust Théophé more than Manon, and admire the diplomat more for not descending into criminal behavior like Des Grieux.) In fact, we can’t be sure Théophé really died; on the last page of the novel, the diplomat writes: “I did not even learn of her death until several months after the dismal accident, because of the care that my family and all the friends who saw me in my solitude took to keep it from me” (717). This wouldn’t be the first time in a Prévost novel where a character was *reported* dead, only to survive, and given what the diplomat has told us of Taffy’s moxie and independence, it’s more likely she ran away and the family hushed it up. But no matter; despite the title, this is the diplomat’s story, not hers. *The Story of a Modern Greek Woman* is not as melodramatic as *Manon Lescaut*, and for that reason will probably never be turned into an opera or a ballet, but it’s just as accomplished, if not more so, and deserves to be as well known.

While Prévost and Marivaux are now considered the most significant French novelists of the 1730s, that decade saw the breaking of a new wave of novelists, many of whom regarded the histrionic prudery in Marivaux's *Marianne* and Prévost's novels as *so* 17th-century. In real life, not every woman bolts for a convent whenever a man winks at her, or dooms herself to an operatic death if she winks back. At the crest of the wave is a dandy named Claude-Prosper Jolyot de Crébillon (1707–77), called Crébillon *fils* to distinguish him from his dramatist father. He has been described as a "tall, willowy, serious young man, with a cultivated dry wit" (Levy, 182), worth noting only because even though his novels might seem like the cultivated concoctions of a dry-witted dandy, they are quite serious in their cultural criticism; they have not always been taken seriously by literary critics, but they were by the French authorities who repeatedly jailed Crébillon for his subversive wit.

In his dozen or so novels, Crébillon tweaked the prevailing genres of fiction (and twitted a few of their authors), beginning with the epistolary novel. *Letters from the Marchioness de M*** to the Count de R**** (1732) is a one-sided collection of letters that, like Boursault's *Letters from a Lady of Quality to a Chevalier*—Crébillon's likely model—tracks a young married woman's adultery from flirtation to consummation to abandonment, and like Montesquieu's *Persian Letters* ends with what appears to be a suicide note. (Some critics say she dies of a broken heart, but there are hints she plans to stab herself à la Lucretia in Scudéry's *Clelia*.) Crébillon expands upon the shorter one-sided epistolary novels of Boursault and his predecessors in two ways: psychologically, by featuring a protagonist who is much more complicated than those earlier epistlers; and formally, by including a cover letter by the discoverer of the letters explaining that she is presenting only 70 of 500 extant letters (along with some shorter notes interspersed throughout), which requires the imaginative participation of the reader. Though the undated letters are presented chronologically and form a coherent narrative, one can't help but wonder what those other 430 letters contained. At one crucial point, when the couple seems about to consummate their affair, the editorix inserts a tantalizing reminder: "[Some letters are here suppressed.]"[131] Along with the count's missing letters,

more is left out of their affair than included, as though Crébillon wanted to challenge himself to say as much as possible with as little material as he could get away with. It is for this reason one critic calls the *Letters* "a bold experiment," and "perhaps the most radical and daring" of Crébillon's novels (Conroy, 73, 16). And he succeeds brilliantly; this one-sided, limited selection of letters has the fullness of a conventional novel, partly because the experienced reader can fill in the blanks from other novels.

Unlike earlier hand-wringing protagonists of French epistolary novels, the marchioness is spirited, funny, and worldly, dismissing the count's initial importunate pleas for an affair with the amused condescension of a woman too smart to fall for his lines. Though young (early twenties?), she's seen enough of the world to know better, and read enough to know where he gets his material. She refers to *Astrea, Clelia*, and *Don Quixote*, mocks the language of romances, and when the couple plans to meet at a performance of Handel's opera *Rinaldo*, she warns: "whatever soft things you may tell me with relation to Armida and Rinaldo, I shall remember too well that I have been the one ever to allow you to be the other" (billet following letter 60).[132] She also refers to the flighty affairs of their mutual friends, revealing a gift for catty gossip:

> But oh heavens! what company did I find there! I needed no ill humour to make it insupportable. The whole was a composition of indecorum and stupidity not easy to be imagined. The insipid Marquis of ***, half sick and half amorous, with a monstrous patch upon his forehead and a withered complexion, muttered out part of an opera and, at the same time, cast a languishing look at that solemn prude Lady ***, who with a devout and contrite air sighed with much sensuality for the Chevalier N***, whilst he was uttering [an] abundance of respectful dullness to the daughter of that bigot. The two Ladies *** found themselves employment in saying all the disagreeable things of the men which the men think of them. My husband, with a negligent loll, said the greatest indecencies in the world with the modestest air imaginable to soft Lady ***. (19)

Yet this woman who should know better, against her better instincts, gives in to passion, and is shocked to see the count behave afterward like every other rake in life and fiction. She drops enough hints about her unhappy marriage to make her extramarital fling understandable, and the fact she writes the count obsessively (500 letters over what appears to be a six-month period!) betrays a woman not in as much control of her life as she thought she was. She claims in an early letter "I know myself" (16), but it's not long before she admits "My whole letter is a collection of incoherent thoughts" (38). Crébillon leaves it up to us whether we should sympathize with her psychological struggle, or snicker to see a worldly woman who thinks she's too smart to fall for a garden-variety rake get played like an unworldly virgin. (You'd have to be hard-hearted to take the second view, but it's defensible.)

Crébillon's second, more characteristic novel, *The Skimmer* (*L'Ecumoire; ou Tanzaï et Néardarné, histoire japonaise*, 1734), is a cheeky satire on French sexual mores, current fiction (especially the fad for Oriental tales), and religious politics, published—according to the title page—in Bejing by the honorable publishing house of Lou-Chou-Chu-Lu. The author barely pretends it is a translation of an ancient Japanese classic set in a fairyland called Chechianea, where an 18-year-old prince, forbidden by the ruling fairies from marrying before 21, jumps the gun and proposes to a neighboring princess named Néardarné. To circumvent the fairies' age requirement, Prince Tanzaï's guardian fairy Barbacela gives him a yard-long skimming ladle; if he can get both an old lady and the high priest to swallow the skimmer's thick handle, he can marry early. The prince forces the handle into the old lady's mouth, breaking a few teeth, but the high priest refuses to cooperate—just as Cardinal de Noailles refused to allow the pope to cram his bull *Unigenitus* down his throat in 1713. (The bull condemned Jansenism; Crébillon scholars agree the novel parodies this power struggle between the French clergy and Rome.) The old lady the prince violated turns out to be an evil fairy, who takes revenge on the newlyweds by making their sexual organs disappear; the huge skimmer then magically attaches itself to the prince's groin, which gives rise to smutty jokes and adds phallic overtones to the pope's attempt to make the French archbishop his bitch.

It gets sillier. In order to restore their genitalia, Tanzaï has to mate 13 times with a repulsive hag, and Néardarné likewise with a handsome genie, which raises difficult questions of virtue, fidelity, and sacrifice that mock those raised in more high-minded novels. With titillating innuendo and sly suggestion, the narrator/translator relates their separate sexual ordeals, boisterous and bawdy in Tanzaï's case, teased out tediously in Néardarné's. Their genitals restored, their lofty principles compromised by pragmatism, they return to Chechianea, convince the high priest to submit—he "licked the skimmer with a supernatural grace"—and live happily ever after; and if Néardarné suspects the handsome genie visits her occasionally at night in her husband's form, "she took care not to blab it."[133]

Not everyone was amused. Right after *The Skimmer* was published, Crébillon was thrown into jail for a short time because of his mockery of religious squabbles, not to mention the Chechianeans' practice of referring to the deity as the Great Monkey.[134] Abbé Prévost wrote a negative review of it (in volume 5 of his journal *Le Pour et contre*) and no doubt had Crébillon in mind when he suggests, in the preface to *The Dean of Coleraine*, "If bad writers have also succeeded, it has been either from the licentiousness of their works, with regard to morality or religion, or from the satire and detraction they contain." After reading the parody of Marianne's convoluted cogitations and reflections in the middle of *The Skimmer* (3:4–6), Marivaux gratuitously inserted a scene in *The Upstart Peasant* (pp. 158–60) in which an older man criticizes a younger author's new novel—not named, but clearly *The Skimmer*—with pompous condescension, lecturing him on the necessity of structure ("I couldn't see any design in your work"), selection ("One would say that you hadn't taken the trouble to search for ideas but that you had just accepted all the fancies that came to you"), and of shielding the reader from reality, especially when it comes to sex: "The reader, though he likes some freedoms, doesn't like extreme liberties, the excesses; they are endurable only in real life, which softens the shock; they are where they belong only there, and we pass over them because we are more truly men there; but not in a book, where they become stupid, dirty, and disgusting because of their lack of harmony with the quiet condition of the reader" (159). I hate to say it (because I admire Marivaux), but his three-page review is demonstrably wrong—the novel is

clearly organized and focused on the three themes I mention above—and in fact his reads like one of those negative, fuddy-duddy reviews that unconventional novels often receive in the mainstream media. Marivaux felt insulted by Crébillon's parody, and people often say stupid things when insulted. It's hypocritical as well, for Marivaux himself advanced the use of sexual realism in fiction, especially in *The Upstart Peasant*—the very novel in which he criticizes Crébillon!—and the sex scenes in *The Skimmer* are too playful and wink-wink to be called dirty or disgusting. (If it were a movie, it would be rated R, not X.) Rather than upset "the quiet condition of the reader," Crébillon simply shows the reader how love affairs are *really* conducted by the upper-classes, few of whom behave like the characters in romance novels: such characters may as well have been magically deprived of their genitals for all their highfalutin talk of virtue, esteem, merit, honor, and respect as the only bases for relationships. Despite its fairytale setting and farcical elements, *The Skimmer* is actually a realistic novel, a paradox typical of this ingenious work.

Further ingenuity is revealed after stepping back and looking at the frame rather than the picture. Making fun of the prefaces to French novels that pretend they're history rather than mere fiction by explaining how a third party acquired a manuscript or bundle of letters, then tidied them up for publication, Crébillon prefaces *The Skimmer* with an elaborate, three-part account by the "translator," who first explains that the work was traditionally ascribed to a pre-Confucian Chinese Mandarin named Kilo-hoee until a scholar named Cham-hi-hon-chu-ka-hul-chi proved—in the first volume of his *Literary History of China* (Beijing, 1306)—that Kilo-hoee's work was a translation of an older Japanese novel, which itself was translated from the literary remains of the Chechianeans, long extinct. Working forward, the translator then tracks the novel's translation into Dutch, then Latin—attended by commentaries and glosses—and then into Venetian, all by translators with a weak grasp of the languages they were translating from. Capping this farce, the French translator admits his Venetian is shaky because "he studied Italian but two months, under a Frenchman, his particular friend, who had lived but six weeks in Rome" (1:viii). In the course of the novel, the translator occasionally admits he may be mistranslating something—like the evocation of the Chechianean deity as "O Luminous Ape" (2:9)—but finally, about two-thirds through the

novel, he comes clean and admits he has, in effect, been writing his own novel:

> The only duty of a translator is to render his author literally, except in those places where he does not understand him, for in this case he is allowed to paraphrase, comment upon, or dress him as he pleases. The translator of this book owns frankly that, as he does not understand his author perfectly, he has added as many silly things at least as he suppressed; that he has been prolix where the Chinese author was concise, exact where he was inaccurate, dark where he was clear, jocose where he was serious, courtly where he was philosophical, and that with regard to the several errors he may have committed, he does not apologize or beg the noble reader's pardon on that account, since this would not make his work a whit the better, nor would he himself be more esteemed for such groveling condescension. (4:13)

At this point in the novel he's trying to describe an ancient Chechianean opera, but opts for describing a modern French one instead, focusing on French actresses who alternate between roles of virgin and whore, like most women of the translator's acquaintance. The translator's obviously off on a frolic of his own, satirizing current French culture with only superficial reference to the ancient text he's supposedly translating, and which he often mocks in his chapter titles—"Containing Events of Very Little Importance"; "The Least Diverting in the Whole Book"; "Trifles Treated on Too Seriously"; "Which Perhaps Will Not Be Understood By Everybody" (the Marivaux parody); "Which Is of No Use but to Spin out the Work"—a practice Crébillon picked up from Cervantine writers like Scarron and one that he would employ again to much comic effect. And of course behind the translator, holding up the frame, stands Crébillon, confident he has created a novel, as another chapter title has it, "Which Will Make More Readers Than One Gape."

After an epistolary novel and an Oriental fairy tale, Crébillon turned his hand to the memoir-novel, which resulted in his finest work, *The Wayward Head and Heart* (*Les Egarements du coeur et de l'esprit,* 1736–38). In his game-changing preface, Crébillon proclaims "Every age, every year even, introduces a new taste," and that it is time to retire novels like Prévost's:

"instead of filling [novels] with farfetched and obscure situations, with heroes whose characters and adventures alike are always incredible," novelists should aim for a more accurate "picture of human life. . . . Events artfully invented would be naturally expressed. There would be no more sinning against propriety and reason. Sentiment would not be exaggerated; man would at last see himself as he is. He would be dazzled less, but instructed more."[135] This sounds like the recipe for a respectable mainstream novel, but *The Wayward Head and Heart* is startling, even shocking compared to the fiction of its time. Crébillon blows the whistle on the standard French novel and announces Adult Swim, then releases a few sharks into the pool.

Reliving a two-week period back during the profligate Regency (1715–23), the Comte de Meilcour recalls all the stupid mistakes he made when he was 17 and thought he was ready to enter adult society. Several older women, beginning with the 40-something Mme de Lursay, offer to show him the ropes, only to have their stratagems exposed by a sardonic libertine named Versac, all while Meilcour struggles with his love-at-first-sight attraction to his indifferent cousin Hortense. Finally consummating his affair with Lursay but still in unrequited love with Hortense, unsure whether his mentor Versac is the smartest or most corrupt man in Paris, Meilcour is left with "an emptiness in my heart" that echoes the "void in my heart" he felt at the beginning of the novel" (771, 909).

As in his first novel, Crébillon works under self-imposed constraints, an exercise in minimalism: a brief time-frame, a small number of characters and settings, minimal decor, and a limited point of view. He keeps the novel brief by omitting, with been-there-done-that impatience, the stuff most novelists would include: "The imaginings of lovers, their doubts, their changing resolutions, are sufficiently well known for the conflicting emotions that tormented me to be very easily divined, and I have spoken too often of my inexperience—my story shows too clearly how many delusions I owed to it—for me to have to dwell further on the subject" (874). Shaved off 100 pages right there. The language, as promised, is "naturally expressed"; the prose is hard and clean, with almost no metaphors or imagery. The dialogue is highly realistic, and deliberately

eschews “novelese.” Here, for example, is Versac wising up Meilcour regarding a cougar trying to sink her claws into him:

> “When a man of your age visits a woman like Mme de Senanges, appears in public with her, and permits a correspondence to be established, he must have his reasons. One does not commonly do such things without a motive. She must think that you adore her.”
>
> “What she supposes is of no interest to me,” I answered. “I know how to undeceive her.”
>
> “That would be very ill bred,” he replied,[136] “and you give her some right to complain of your behavior.”
>
> “It seems to me,” I answered, “that I have more right to complain of hers. What reason has she to think I owe her my heart?”
>
> “Your heart!” said he. “Novelists’ jargon. What makes you suppose that is what she is asking for? She is incapable of so ridiculous a pretension.”
>
> “What does she want then?” I asked.
>
> “A kind of intimate connection,” he answered. “A warm friendship that resembles love in its pleasures without having any of its foolish niceties. In a word, she has a fancy for you, and that is all you owe her in return.” (878)

Mocking his younger self’s trust in novels, the older narrator wryly notes, “I was deeply in love because the passion had been implanted in my heart by one of those bolts from the blue that characterize all great affairs in novels” (788), and later condemns their uselessness: “I remembered in that instant all the episodes in novels I had read that treated of speaking to one’s mistress, and was surprised to find that not one of them was of any help to me. I kept hoping she might trip, that she might even twist her ankle” (803), like Marivaux’s Marianne. “Sentiment would not be exaggerated” Crébillon predicted of the new novel, and here sentiment is raped by cynical worldliness, which may be exaggerated—the novel is a scathing attack on the leisure class, especially women, and the dialogue burns with “polite acidity” (863)—but which nonetheless results in a more accurate “picture of human life” than other novels of the time.[137] His characterization is

refreshingly realistic and psychologically acute; his analysis of society women prompted the French novelist/critic Sébastien Mercier to write shortly after Crébillon's death, "He knew women as much as it was possible to know them" (Levi, 182), and in the outrageous Versac—who tosses off epigrams like a Wildean dandy—he resuscitated the libertine figure from d'Urfé's *Astrea*: Count Versac is Hylas transplanted from the forest of Forez to the salons of Paris. His relationship to Meilcour anticipates that of Vautrin to Eugène de Rastignac in Balzac's *Le Père Goriot* (as Mylne points out [135]) and of Lord Harry to Wilde's Dorian Gray (as I'm pointing out). And for a novel obsessed with the sexual games aristocrats play, it's quite chaste, free of the schoolboy naughtiness Crébillon's name used to conjure up.

The three-part *Wayward Head and Heart* may be incomplete; summarizing the novel in his preface, Crébillon writes, "The first and second parts deal with [Meilcour's] ignorance and with his first experiences of love. In sections that follow, he is a man full of false ideas and riddled with follies, who is still governed less by himself than by the persons whose interest it is to corrupt his heart and mind. You will see him finally, in the last part, restored to himself, owing all his virtues to a good woman" (769–70). Whether the public's response wasn't strong enough to inspire him to continue (a condition he sets at the end of the preface), or whether, like Marivaux, he felt he had made his point and didn't need to press it, is impossible to say. (Specialists of the period are divided on this point.) At any rate, the ambiguous ending leaves the novel more open to interpretation, one of many reasons the novel feels uncannily modern; aside from its period details, it sounds like a novel that could have been written in 1963, the year Barbara Bray's fluent translation appeared. Even the title sounds modern: *The Wayward Head and Heart* rather than *Memoirs of the Count of Asterisks*. I'm not a fan of minimalist fiction, but Crébillon worked the fat off the French novel to admirable effect, helped it to slim down and grow up, and established a leanness (and even meanness) that would characterize much French fiction for the rest of the century.

About two-thirds of *The Wayward Head and Heart* is rendered in dialogue. Crébillon upped this to about 98 percent in his next two novels, his most radical experiments in narrative. *The Opportunities of a Night* (*La Nuit et le moment*, written in 1737 but not published until 1755) and

Fortunes in the Fire (*Le Hasard du coin du feau*, written between 1737 and 1740, published in 1763) typographically resemble stage plays, and are Crébillon's most impressive displays yet of working under self-imposed constraints. Like a handcuffed magician escaping from a box underwater, Crébillon manages to convey in these two short novels a large novel's worth of material in as few pages as possible and in a totally new way. Why? As the male protagonist of *The Opportunities of a Night* says of love affairs, "Adventures of that kind have so little variety that one is like a thousand others," so imaginative form rather than content is necessary to seduce the reader who prefers variety over more of the same.[138]

The primary narrative begins in the *oui* hours of the night and ends at seven in the morning. A libertine appropriately named Clitandre, naked beneath a dressing gown, enters the bedroom of Cidalise,[139] the young hostess of a weeklong house party attended by other bright young things, all of whom seem to have slept with one another at some point. Cidalise allows her maid to undress her and put her to bed in front of Clitandre, who appreciates the flash of her "exquisite legs" and who pulls up a chair to converse with her. (This in itself is not shocking; while in bed aristocrats back then often received visits by friends, especially in the morning, continuing to chat as they dressed and did their hair.) Set on seducing this woman he has admired for some time, he gradually moves from the chair to her bedside, then flings off his gown and climbs into bed with Cidalise, who makes ladylike objections but doesn't kick him out. Taking further liberties with his conversation partner, he eventually tires of her polite resistance and rapes her, which leads to proclamations of love on both sides, after which they alternate between lovemaking and storytelling. The stories they tell concern their recent lovers, many of whom are under Cidalise's roof; hers concern her two previous lovers (she's young and has only enjoyed two so far), while his star a string of French belles—Araminte, Julie, Célimène, Belise, Julie, Aspasie, Luscinde—and the clever tactics he used to ring their bells. Even though the novel features only two characters (and a smirking stage director/editor who occasionally chimes in), a secondary narrative about their entire set of acquaintances gradually unfolds, along with analyzes of the psychological motives behind their sexual game of musical chairs.

Cidalise and Clitandre credit “modern philosophy” for their enlightened view of sexual relations; as the latter says, “philosophy has reorganized our ideas; but her achievement has been to teach us to understand the motives of our actions, and not to believe that they are governed by chance” (22). Philosophy has also taught them to retire the concept of “love”; Clitandre asks, “what was love but a desire that we amuse ourselves by exaggerating, a movement of the senses transformed by the vanity of men into a virtue?” (23). Libertines like him are driven to score as often as possible, and therefore watch for moments when a woman lets down her guard, then strike like a snake. He’s très blasé about that which heroes of earlier novels risked their lives for: “One lives in the world, one is bored, one notices women who can hardly be said to be amusing themselves: one is young, and vanity combines with idleness. If the possession of a woman is not always a pleasure, it is at least in some sort an occupation” (126). Clitandre recounts two longish anecdotes near the end of the night to illustrate the libertine’s predatory instincts, first a funny one concerning scientifically trained Julie, who is convinced summer heat reduces a man’s sexual desire; since her position invites empirical testing—“She was lying on a sofa in a careless attitude, and was even more carelessly dressed; in fact her attire was merely a simple shift, of which the ribbons were half undone, and a tolerably short skirt” (134)—Clitandre “for the honour of the science of physics” vigorously demonstrates the invalidity of her thesis. He then tells a longer one in which he takes advantage, several times in one night, of a woman named Luscinde who is angry at her lover. But when she hints at a commitment, Clitandre quickly convinces her to make up with her lover—and *then* smooth-talks her into giving him one more for the road.

Cidalise, on the other hand, insists that even modern women want to be courted before engaging in sex (there’s no talk of marriage in this novel): “certain attentions, certain affectionate letters, protestations of eternal love, a thousand things, in fact, that men think nothing of, but to which we women are always unfortunate enough to attach too much importance” (52). Men don’t have time for all that, Crébillon implies, and this conflict between seizing the moment and playing the game causes tension between men and women, a disconnect that, in extreme cases, drives some of the former to rape and some of the latter to embitterment. Clitandre is not proud of his opportunistic sex drive—“you can hardly imagine how we despise

ourselves for these shameful exhibitions of weakness" (118)—and Cidalise later belittles "those little evasions which we usually think are due to the modesty of our sex and which, as a matter of fact, are merely a means to serve our vanity" (77–78) and to maintain their reputation. The new generation has learned not to confuse love with lust but continues to struggle (as people still do) with how to reconcile them.

The candor with which Crébillon's characters discuss these matters is startling and sometimes shocking, as are some of the comments of the sardonic stage editor. Here is his description of Cidalise's rape:

> [The warmth of cidalise's demeanour seems in some measure to authorize clitandre to attempt some further caresses. His familiarity, though not extreme, is more than she is prepared to allow, and she refuses once, and again. He is irritated, and gives way to a display of violence which, if not unprecedented, is at any rate unusual, and should teach women not to admit anyone to their beds in so lighthearted a manner. . . . She does not fail to reproach him with his insolence; but when a man has so far compromised with his courtesy, there is little merit and possibly still less safety in not persisting in his wickedness. So he continues most unworthily to abuse his superior strength. At last he looks at her with a smile and with as pleased an air as if he had done the most admirable thing in the world, and even tries to kiss her hand. The reader will easily apprehend that, after his disgraceful behaviour, this demonstration of gratitude, though entirely respectful, is somewhat coldly received.] (104–5)

Note the curious mixture of disapproval and scientific disinterest. At times he becomes impatient with the action and invites the reader to fill in "those pleasing and passionate utterances of love's gratitude" that partners usually exchange after sex, confident "the reader will have the less grounds for complaint, inasmuch as we only deprive him of certain incoherent remarks, which he will much sooner supply for himself in accordance with his own feelings, than peruse here" (109–10). When postcoital Cidalise predictably asks Clitandre, "Do you really love me still?" the editor lets us answer her; Clitandre "Tries to get rid of the fears of cidalise by the most ardent caresses. But, as this method of removing doubts is not favoured by every

one, those of our readers who would find it inconvenient may try another: they may invent for clitandre the most admirable sentiments—all that might be best calculated to reassure a lady in a situation of this kind" (111–12).[140] Near the end, he wearily notes "not everything that lovers say is of general interest" and begins to "omit their somewhat inconsequent utterances" (146). By turns pedantic, heartless, and knowing—"The reader must not think that from what cidalise is saying to him, she is seriously finding fault with him" (187)—the editor adds the perfect finish to a daring novel, surprising in both form and content.

Crébillon followed this with another short novel in the same form and on the same theme, *Fortunes in the Fire* (*Le Hasard du coin du feu*, or colloquially, Getting Lucky by the Fire). It's a more cerebral variation on the same conflict between love and inclination (*goût*), as though Henry James read *Opportunities* and, after a shot of absinthe, decided to write something similar. The cast adds one more character (plus a walk-on role for a servant) and again features an arch editor, but otherwise remains as formally constrained as the earlier one. The novel opens on a cold winter day as two women—the worldly Marquise and the romantic Célie—discuss romantic involvements in front of the fire in Célie's boudoir. The latter is surprised that the Marquise doesn't mind that her current lover, the Duc de Clerval, has meaningless affairs on the side, and that she doesn't believe in love at first sight, which the Marquise regards as rare as the sight of a ghost. Célie drops hints that she finds Clerval attractive, and after the duke arrives for a visit, the Marquise alerts him to that amusing fact, which he brushes off. The Marquise is then called away to attend her sick mother, at which point another Crébillonesque *pas de deux* of seduction commences center stage. But first the editor intrudes to inform us that, yes, he remembered to stoke the fire in Célie's bedroom. "The editor of this dialogue, having put himself beyond reproach in this matter, flatters himself that he may be dispensed from returning to this interesting subject."[141]

An older, more distinguished version of Clitandre—which is to say, a libertine still on the lookout for an easy score—Clerval verbally spars with Célie on the difference between male and female expectations in relationships, but at a much higher level of discourse than *Opportunities*' slap-and-tickle colloquy. When Célie learns that the duke has been

interested in her for some time, she grills him like a bewigged lawyer: “The rococo cadences of their language, as she pursues the matter, and he tries to avoid it, defy description,” one critic has noted (Cherpack, 164). Asking whether a woman interested in him should appeal to his heart or his senses, she tries to pin him down:

> THE DUKE: As regards a way of thinking, I have my own way. Nothing is more sure; but it is, like that of all men of the world, so subordinate to circumstances that I should feel dishonestly in endowing myself with an invariable one. As to my constitution, it is such that, I avow, I would not answer for myself very long were the appeal to my senses rather than to my heart.
>
> CÉLIE (*smiling*): That is to say that with a touch of slight impropriety one would have a very easy success with you.
>
> THE DUKE: I agree. I detest it, but it leads me astray; provided nevertheless, that I am not asked to love, for I say it again, that is not the way to make me love.
>
> CÉLIE: Will you really swear to that?
>
> THE DUKE: A sensible man, above all when it be a question of things in which caprice or fancy may play a far greater part than one thinks, ought not, in my opinion, to swear to anything. All that I know is, merely, that if contempt has never prevented me from feeling desire, it has, up to now, at least, rendered me inaccessible to love.
>
> CÉLIE: That you despise a woman who, in reality, only wants to appeal to your senses, I do not find difficult to believe; but it seems to me that you owe quite a contrary feeling to her who, loving you enough to face in your favour all that they say we owe to ourselves, yet attacks your senses with the intention of reaching your heart by that way. You will perhaps reply that this confidence in her charms might show slightly too much vanity on her part; but when she has the wherewith to justify it, at least one cannot rightfully ridicule her. (70–71)

"The pleasure of reading Crébillon," Thomas Kavanagh has said of passages like this, "lies in admiring how his characters find new ways to surprise, parry, and elude the rhetorical traps they continually set for one another."[142] Despairing after pages and pages of such interrogation at appealing to Clerval's heart, Célie aims lower and exposes a leg as though wanting only to warm it by the fire, which has the desired effect. Clerval sexually assaults her, withdraws briefly for more discussion, and then after Célie sprawls in an armchair as invitingly as Julie did in *Opportunities*, Clerval returns to the fray and apparently achieves orgasm. (The language is quite oblique.) Like Cidalise, Célie doesn't really object to being (in effect) raped; as in Heian Japan, that seems to be the brutal way the game was played among their set. *Autres temps, autres mœurs*, as the French say. Like Clitandre eeling his way out of a commitment to Luscinde after he's had her, Clerval then gets Célie to agree that their mutual friendship with the Marquise makes an affair untenable, but he talks her into pretending to take a new lover to provide cover for the occasional quickie. They squeeze in one more, and then the editor of *Fortunes in the Fire* returns to have the final, punning word: "The hour of separation arrives, he leaves Célie, he goes to visit the Marquise, who, if she finds the flame of his affection as warm as ever, yet, to use her own expression, should on this occasion, by all appearances, find it burning a little low" (103).

Slower and less playful than *The Opportunities of a Night*, *Fortunes in the Fire* is more serious and profound. Crébillon continues to tell us things previous novelists shied away from saying, like the poor choices a dumped woman sometimes makes on the rebound: "Today, I have no less difficulty in understanding it than you," Célie confesses to Clerval. "Vexation, apparently; that terrible void which follows after passion, so painful for anyone who has tasted of its joys; his [the new guy's] assiduity; his patience; the boredom of doing nothing, an ill-conceived desire for revenge. . . . In truth! I myself fail to understand it" (58, the author's ellipses). Not until the 20th-century would readers hear a woman talk that frankly. While females in other novels of the time became suicidal at the merest hint of infidelity, Crébillon expresses the mature woman's appreciation of the difference between having a man who is constant as opposed to merely faithful. (As Joe Gideon tells Katie Jagger in *All That Jazz*, "I go out with

any girl in town; I stay in with you.") A military man, Clerval tells us there will never be an end to the war between the sexes: "Could one learn the way of a woman's mind one would never attack her save in her own method, and the two sexes would be equal gainers; but reduced as one nearly always is on such an essential matter, to walking in the dark and expecting anything, what chance is there of fittingly displaying either boldness or restraint?" (50). He makes no apologies for his *carpe diem* approach to women, and Célie admits women don't mind being seized if the moment is right. The "moment" is a key term in Crébillon's amatory vocabulary, which Clerval defines as "A certain mood of the senses, as unexpected as it is involuntary, that a woman may veil; but which if it is noticed or felt by someone whose interest lies in profiting by it, would place her in the greatest danger in the world of being a shade more complaisant than she believed she either ought to be, or could be" (51). Crébillon keeps us in the moment by way of "live-action" dialogue and the editor's present-tense commentary, giving the work an immediacy lacking in conventional novels. The editor's comments are more insightful than those in *Opportunities*, probing his characters' thoughts and motivations with considerable subtlety. (These are the passages that bring James to mind.) Both *Opportunities* and *Fortunes* look slight and have sometimes been dismissed as high-class erotica, but Cherpack is right to insist "They are, in their way, small masterpieces, exemplifying *in parvo* Crébillon's marvelous ear for the cadences of conversation, the complexity of his psychological analysis and generalizing, and some of his basic notions about love and the men and women of his day" (170).

Instead of returning to *The Wayward Head and Heart* (if indeed he left it unfinished), Crébillon next returned to the faux-Oriental mode of *The Skimmer* and spent his talent on his most notorious novel, *The Sofa* (*Le Sopha couleur de rose*, 1742). The Scarronesque chapter titles advertised in the Table of Contents promise great fun, but turn out to be mostly accurate:

1. The Least Tedious in the Book
2. Will Not Be to Everybody's Taste
3. Which Contains Some Things Hard to Believe
4. Wherein Some Things Will Be Seen Which Might Well Not Have Been Foreseen

5. Better to Omit than to Read
6. No More Extraordinary than Entertaining
7. In Which There Are Many Things to Find Fault With
8.
9. In Which You Will Find an Important Point to Settle
10. In Which, Among Other Things, You Will Find a Way of Killing Time
11. Which Contains a Recipe Against Enchantments
12. Not Much Different from the Foregoing
13. The End of One Adventure and Beginning of Another
14. Which Contains More Words than Deeds
15. Which Will Not Amuse Those Who Have Found the Previous One Wearisome
16. Which Contains a Dissertation Which Will Not Appeal to Everyone
17. Which Will Teach Inexperienced Ladies, If Such There Be, How to Evade Embarrassing Questions
18. Full of Allusions Very Difficult to Trace
19. Ah! So Much the Better!
20. Soulful Delights
21. The Final Chapter

I did indeed find chapter 14 "wearisome" and, as warned by the title of chapter 15, was not amused by it either. The premise is no sillier than that of *The Skimmer*. The grandson of Shahrazad of *Arabian Nights* fame, Shah Baham of India, inherited her love of stories and commands one of his courtiers to beguile him and his wife with tales for half an hour each day, preferably ones containing "wonders, fairies, talismans," adding paradoxically, "for those are the only things that are really true."[143] Amanzei unfolds an R-rated serial of metempsychosis over the next three weeks: in a previous dissolute lifetime he was cursed by Brahma to inhabit a series of sofas until he found one upon which two virgins made love. As his soul floats from one sofa to another in the city of Agra, he observes a number of philanderers, adulteresses, libertines, party girls, and sexual hypocrites, until eventually a pair of 15-year-olds have sex on top of him and he reincarnates back into human form. Eavesdropping on people during

their most private moments, Crébillon-as-Amanzei exposes the false fronts women in particular put up in public, but neither these revelations nor the bawdy tales in which they're couched are new. (Indeed, the novel's supernatural survey of secret lives recalls Lesage's *Devil upon Crutches*.) The longest narrative arc, which takes up half the novel (chaps. 10–19), introduces Crébillon's most calculating libertine yet, a cold-blooded cocksman named Nasses, but his serpentine methods of seduction add little to the playbook the author had already developed in his dialogue-novels. As in those superior works, the dialogue is good and plentiful, but by this point it has lost its freshness. Even the apparent novelty of a voyeuristic sofa wasn't new; the year before *The Sofa* appeared, another libertine novelist named Louis-Charles Fougeret de Monbron published *Le Canapé couleur de feu* (The Flame-colored Couch, 1741), "which contains a *sopha* that recounts the adventures which took place on its cushions" (Conroy, 145).

On the plus side, *The Sofa* is Crébillon's most corrosive critique of his society. As in *The Skimmer*, the eastern setting is a smoke screen; *The Sofa*, Conroy points out, is "less an imaginary picture of oriental mores than it is an exact depiction of current events and an exposé of the prevalent mentality in the noble *quartiers* of Paris" (167n5). And that mentality is cruel, deceitful, hypocritical, cynical, phony. The novel features the largest and most colorful cast of any of Crébillon's novels, from potentates to prostitutes, almost all of whom are reprehensible in blatantly obvious ways. In his wanderings, Amanzei's divan soul finds only one decent character, an unnamed girl described at the beginning of chapter 4. The rest of Agra/Paris is a snakepit. The novel also pricks the shiny red balloon of young love, exalted in so many novels then and now. Nasses explains why he prefers experienced women over virgins:

> "At that tender age when a woman has not yet loved, if she wishes to be conquered, it is less that she is urged by her feelings than that she wishes to have them: in short, she would rather please than love. She is dazzled rather than moved. How can you believe her when she says she loves? Has she anything with which to compare the nature and strength of her feelings? In a heart where the newness of the most feeble emotions makes them important, the most trivial sentiment appears to be passion, and mere desire, rapture. In short, it is not at a stage at which one is so

> ignorant of love that one can flatter oneself that one feels it, or ought to be convinced that one does." (17)

True, but try telling that to a 15-year-old girl "in love for the very first time."[144]

The most valuable thing tucked inside *The Sofa* is its dramatization of the eternal conflict between art and entertainment, and the frustration of a literary writer who has to deal with mainstream readers who would rather be coddled than challenged. Some 40 times during the course of the novel Shah Baham interrupts Amanzei to complain about his narrative or to ask a dumb question; as Amanzei deferentially answers him, we hear Crébillon defending his artistic choices and tutoring the reader to appreciate his innovative approach to fiction.[145] On the first page of the preface, he warns that fantasy books like *The Arabian Nights* can be misunderstood by readers who fail to look beneath their fanciful surface, as the shah will do with *The Sofa*:

> Only those who are really enlightened, above prejudice, knowing the hollowness of science, realize how useful to society such books really are; and how much one ought to esteem, and even revere, those who have genius enough to invent them, and sufficient firmness of mind to devote their lives to making them, in spite of the stigma of frivolity which pride and ignorance have attributed to this sort of writing. The important lessons such fables contain, the fine flights of imagination so often encountered in them, and the ludicrous notions in which they always abound, make no appeal to the vulgar—who commend most what they least understand, while flattering themselves that they do so perfectly.

Shah Baham represents "the vulgar," an exaggerated version of the type of reader who wants to be dazzled by "wonders, fairies, talismans" without delving into their symbolism or sufficiently appreciating "those who have genius enough to invent them." He has no patience with literary finesse, repeatedly urging Amanzei to cut to the chase and avoid any sort of subtlety. His frequent interruptions represent the literary writer's worst nightmare of what the general reader demands of him:

> "No more of that!" the Sultan broke in angrily. "A pox on these musty aphorisms you keep on dishing up to us!"
>
> "But, Sire," Amanzei pleaded, "they are occasionally indispensable."
>
> "I tell you they are not," the Sultan retorted. "And even if they were . . . In short, since these stories are being told for my sake, I expect them to be of the kind I like. Amuse me!" (3, author's ellipsis)

The crafty author sneaks in one more aphorism anyway and continues to stay true to his art, despite the shah's constant heckling, hoping against hope he will come to appreciate his efforts to provide something more than mindless entertainment. (Arrogant? Yes, but contemptuous of people who pretend to be something they're not, the committed artist is not about to pretend to be an entertainer, for that would make him no better than the cynical phonies this novel skewers.) Crébillon had been writing innovative fiction for a decade by this time, and these interruptions parody the criticism he had been receiving; Amanzei's patient responses, along with those of the shah's more intelligent wife, provide a primer on the new kind of fiction Crébillon proposed in his preface to *The Wayward Head and Heart*. Even though that and the two dialogue-novels that followed provide more satisfying examples of his innovations, *The Sofa* can still be read as an interesting experiment in critifiction. I am probably underestimating it, for *The Sofa* sags only in comparison with Crébillon's previous fiction; if it's the first novel you read by him, the difference between it and other fiction of the time jumps out. The metafictional novel ends with Shah Baham's apostrophe to Shahrazad: " 'Ah, Grandmother!' he concluded with a sigh, 'this was not the way you told *your* stories!' " (21). Crébillon intends that as a compliment.

The Sofa was certainly influential, especially on Diderot's *Indiscreet Jewels* (1748) and Laclos's *Dangerous Liaisons* (1782). It can even be seen tucked between the cushions of the sofa in plate 4 of Hogarth's *Marriage à la Mode* (1745), a clever visual pun. But even though Crébillon published it anonymously, *The Sofa* was quickly identified as his and he was banished from Paris for three months. Evidently its Oriental smoke screen was too thin to conceal the identities of his satirical targets, so they in effect slapped a restraining order on him. This hit him hard, and he didn't publish any

further fiction for a dozen years, and when he did resume writing, the results were inferior.

One later novel of his is worth noting only for its procedural audacity, an unauthorized collaboration that recalls some postmodern exercises in appropriation.[146] *The Sofa* was translated into English in 1742 by Eliza Haywood, who in 1744 published a novel entitled *The Fortunate Foundlings*. Ten years later, Crébillon brought out *The Happy Orphans* (*Les Heureux orphelins, histoire imitée de l'anglais*, 1754), which begins as a loose translation of Haywood's novel, departing from the original mainly by substituting English names for her more romantic ones (Dorilaus, Horatio, Melanthe). But Crébillon soon abandons Haywood's sentimental tale of virtue in distress to return to his libertine stomping grounds as an older woman tells Haywood's heroine how she was once seduced by a rake, whose letters later provide his view of their affair. As Mylne explains, this "curious hotch-potch . . . consists, ostensibly, of a [plagiarized/translated] third-person narrative, a story in memoir-form, and a sequence of letters" (140–41). Though this hybrid form is technically interesting, the actual result isn't particularly rewarding. Some of the dialogue has a blunt British bluster to it, as when the old rake Lord Chester bellows, "Run, d—n you, every way! Seek all over the house after this little, hypocritical, cunning b—h! G—d d—n you, Mrs. Modesty, if you don't give me an account of her speedily, I'll set fire to your house and fling you into the flames! D—n me, don't you know that I'm a peer of the realm? I'll be the ruin of you, by G—d" (257–58). But most of it reads like an old-fashioned novel, not the avant-garde fiction he was writing earlier. Antoinette Marie Sol, who read both novels more closely than I did, concludes: "Crébillon turns what starts out as a faithful translation of the English woman's novel into something else entirely, reverses its ideological orientation, and rewrites it as an indictment of the sentimental as a stance of empowerment for women," which sounds promising, like Kathy Acker's textual appropriations of *Don Quixote* and *Great Expectations*. "However, Crébillon's revision fails in part due to his inability to present a believable sentimental position, reducing his sentimental heroines to insincere cardboard stereotypes" (41). She's probably right (if sentimental heroines were ever more than cardboard stereotypes to begin with), but I recall Crébillon's Clitandre in *The*

Opportunities of a Night: “I am afraid you may think it worse than it was. After all, it was only an experiment, and there is no law against experiments” (179).

Crébillon, Marivaux, and Prévost are the Big Three of French fiction of the 1730s—and I’d rank them in that order for modern appeal—but there are a few other novelists of the decade worth noticing. The Big Three, as it happens, are satirized in a light-hearted critifiction published in 1735 entitled *The Wonderful Travels of Prince Fan-Feredin in Novelland* (*Voyage merveilleux du Prince Fan-Férédin dans la Romancie*) by a Jesuit historian named Guillaume-Hyacinthe Bougeant (1690–1743). In what is revealed at the end to be a dream, a well-read man named Monsieur de la Brosse dreams that he is Prince Fan-Feredin, a bookworm who detests his surroundings because they don’t resemble those in novels, so he sets out for the idealized Novelland. He arrives there by way of a subterranean cavern like the one in Prévost’s *Cleveland*, and it’s everything he expects it to be: everyone is young and beautiful, no one takes time to eat (preferring to tell interminable stories about themselves), flowers spring up beneath the feet of storybook heroines, and the weather is perfect: “Thus we have never heard of a hero being incommoded by rain, wind, or snow; or having caught cold from the vapors arising at night, when by the light of the moon he has expressed his torments of love.”[147] As expected, the Novellanders speak novelese, which follows two basic rules according to the prince’s travel guide—another prince named Zazaraph, Paladin of Dondindandinia, whom he came across sleeping beneath a tree—“the first is to express nothing plainly, but always with exaggeration, figure, metaphor, or allegory,” and the second, “never uttering a word without one or more epithets” (5). Gently mocking the manner and tropes of 17th-century heroic romances, Bougeant hits all the easy targets, the same hit a half century earlier by Boileau in *Heroes of Romances* and by satirical novelists like Scarron, Furetière, and Subligny. *Très passé* by 1735.

The heroes of romances swan around in rural Upper Novelland; the protagonists of more recent fiction populate urban Lower Novelland. Here Bougeant resorts to allegory to describe the fiction of his time as a book-fair staffed by “threaders, blowers, embroiderers, botchers, colorers, makers of magic lanterns, exhibitors of curiosity, and some others” (12), and like a

conservative critic today trashing the current fiction scene, he doesn't like most of what he sees. He doesn't name names, but he transparently alludes to all the major and some minor writers of the time, dismissing with haughty condescension memoir-novels, fairy tales, Oriental translations and imitations, picaresques, and anything out of the ordinary.[148] Prévost's *Cleveland* is clobbered several times, Marivaux mocked, and here is what he thinks of Crébillon, whose faux-Japanese romance of Tanzaï and Néardarné had been published the year before (and which earned him a short prison sentence, the author reminds us):

> "O gods!" cried I at this instant, "what a dreadful vapor! Great Paladin, what pestilence is this?" "Ah!" exclaimed he, "let us fly quick to preserve ourselves from the infection." We ran, in effect, and when we were afar off: "I had forgotten," said the prince, "that we should have avoided the road we were in unless we were willing to expose ourselves to the danger of being poisoned. It is," added he, "a young lanterneer who causes this infection. He is called Tancrebsaï. Being the son of a man celebrated for his fine works, he blushed not to embrace the trade of a maker of magic lanterns, and as he is youthful and inexperienced, in attempting to make a new composition wherewith to paint his magic lantern, he composed so offensive a potion that he was obliged to shut up his laboratory, and after performing a quarantine, prohibited working in this manner." (12)

The sniffy author praises only a few of the artisans' shops he passes: given his conservative tastes, he predictably approves of *The Princess de Clèves* and *Telemachus,* unpredictably likes Scarron's *Comic Novel* and prefers Lesage's *Devil upon Crutches* over his more popular *Gil Blas*, and inexplicably praises long-forgotten novels like Jean Terrasson's *Sethos* (1731)—a didactic novel about Freemason-types in ancient Egypt—and Marguerite de Lussan's *Anecdotes de la cour de Philippe-Auguste* (1733), which apparently wasn't deemed worthy of translation back when the English were translating almost everything. And he agreed with the French Parlement's decision to burn Louis-Pierre de Longue's *Les Princesses malabares, ou Le Célibat philosophique* (1734), a heavily footnoted novel that he inadvertently makes sound fascinating:

> Scarce was this affair ended when there was announced to the court the arrival of the Malabarian princesses. The name excited curiosity. The spectators hasted to give them place, but no sooner did they begin to explain themselves than everyone, looking at them with surprise, seemed to ask what they said. They spoke in an allegorical, metaphorical, enigmatical language which nobody understood. They disguised even their names under childish anagrams, declaiming one after another without method or order, affecting the tone of a philosopher, and placing on their words the emphasis of an enthusiast to give weight to their extravagancies. It was not, however, difficult to perceive that under these foolish obscurities were concealed many scandalous impieties and maxims of irreligion, which determined all the assembly against these ridiculous princesses. There arose a general cry for their absence. They were banished forever, and the vessel which brought them was publicly burnt. (13)

He doesn't have anything positive to say about foreign fiction: he treats Spanish novels like illegal immigrants, and Zazaraph notes that some Lilliputians and Brobdingnagians recently crashed Upper Novelland, but thankfully those uncouth aliens left "without the least attempt being made to detain them; and all we can say on the subject is that their patron needed not to have taken so long a voyage to learn what he knew before: that there is no real greatness in the world, and that great or little stature is a thing perfectly indifferent to human nature" (7).

Bougeant rightly condemns the lack of originality in most novelists and their tendency to follow in a few well-worn paths; "they very rarely possess that talent which we style invention and which delights in treading original paths, never before explored," Zazaraph complains to Fan-Feredin (8), contradicting what he says about Swift and Crébillon. Coming from someone who states upfront "I detest romances" (Dedicatory Epistle) and that "we must treat all we read in romances as ridiculous visions and puerile tales" (1), Bougeant's criticism is both outdated and unduly harsh, but *The Wonderful Travels of Prince Fan-Feredin in Novelland* shouldn't be taken too seriously; the author apparently didn't. It's a soufflé of critifiction, an after-supper party game of Spot the Allusion for fans of early modern French fiction. It also anticipates those modern novels in which characters

from literature exist in an alternative reality, such as Flann O'Brien's *At Swim-Two-Birds*, Gilbert Sorrentino's *Mulligan Stew*, Desmond MacNamara's *Book of Intrusions*, and Jasper Fforde's Thursday Next series.

The same year *Prince Fan-Feredin* hit the fan, Charles de Fieux de Mouhy (1701–84) published the first volume of his huge, weird novel *Lamékis, ou les voyages extraordinaires d'un Egyptien dans la terre intérieure, avec la découverte de l'Isle des Sylphides* (1735–38). Only a few selections have been translated into English, which can be unearthed in Peter Fitting's anthology *Subterranean Worlds* (32–36), where he offers an eye-boggling summary of the 650-page fantasia in his headnote:

> The novel begins with the title character's father and his adventures as a high priest in Egypt. We are then introduced to the intertwined stories of two exiles from the neighboring North African kingdoms of Abdalles and Amphicléocles—Princess Nasildaé and Prince Motacoa—who have been banished to the underground world and who befriend Lamékis after the death of his parents. The third narrative follows Lamékis to the now joined kingdoms of Abdalles and Amphicléocles[149] and tells of his terrible jealousy; while the fourth describes Lamékis's exile, including his celestial voyage to the Island of the Sylphs. The novel also includes an account of its composition, beginning with a preface in which Mouhy explains that he was told this story by a mysterious Armenian. (29)

Hou là! But here's the best part:

> Halfway through the novel, there is a lengthy scene in which the author is visited by various characters from the novel, who now complain to him about his inaccuracies. They are followed by the philosopher Dehahal—a character from the Island of the Sylphs who had tried unsuccessfully to convince Lamékis to undergo a ritual of purification, and who again urges Mouhy to undergo the same initiation. After he declines, the author awakes in his bed clutching a mysterious manuscript that defies all attempts at translation until, six months later, his pen—on its own—starts to translate the conclusion to *Lamékis*. (30)

I don't think this is what Father Bougeant had in mind when calling for novelists "treading original paths, never before explored." The selections are hallucinatory and horrific, like a cross between H. P. Lovecraft and William S. Burroughs; here's Lamékis in the belly of a whale-sized bee:

> But bit by bit the muscles of the bee's stomach were hammering away so furiously that the parts of my body were quickly losing their distinctiveness and were gradually merging into the blood. . . . My eyes first looked for my head in the devouring stomach of the terrible beast, and then found it in the region of the heart. My head was punctured with holes through which could be seen an enflamed red spirit which was slowly consuming the skull, while the brain itself, as black now as ink, was throbbing in agitation. . . . I was astonished and wondered how my eyes could continue to think and feel without a body or soul when I realized that the pupils were attached by a nerve to my soul which was still struggling to free itself. (34)

In a previous essay on the novel (from which his headnote is taken), Fitting argues that Mouhy wasn't making any satirical or utopian point, as most imaginary voyages do; instead, the novel seems "to lack any purpose other than the exercise of the author's imaginative abilities," taking "sheer delight in invention and textual play" (321, 329). Mouhy fills his novel with marvels, terrors, strange creatures, weird customs, and bizarre humor. Like the experimental writers of the time, he sports with the conventions of fiction; in addition to the metafictional elements mentioned in the headnote, Mouhy litters his novels with mock-scholarly footnotes—some real, some spurious—including some where he pretends to have difficulty with his text. (In one note, he complains that the censor eliminated more than 30 pages from a scene.) Mouhy's later novels sound like knockoffs of popular novels,[150] but this first one sounds like a remarkable literary performance, a "delirium of textual play and vivid imaginings," as Fitting says in his headnote (30); "the novel's extravagances go far beyond anything written at the time and should be seen as an important precursor of the fantastic," he writes in his earlier essay (318). I hope someone is working on an English

translation of *Lamékis*; unlike its conclusion, no pen is going to translate it by itself.

For the banner year of 1735, the editors of the esteemed *New History of French Literature* feature not *Prince Fan-Feredin* nor *Lamékis*—neither of which is even mentioned in its 1,158 pages—but *Memoirs of the Count of Comminge*, published anonymously that year and only later revealed to be by the Marquise de Tencin (1682–1749), the woman on whom Marivaux modeled the admirable Mme Dorsin in *The Life of Marianne*. Tencin's slim novel takes the form of an end-of-life confession by a Trappist monk about the doomed love that sent him into dumb seclusion. The love of his life was an ice princess of the strictest virtue, a saint of self-sacrifice named Adelaide. Given Tencin's wild youth as a Parisian party girl, the novel is surprisingly (hypocritically?) sentimental and religiose, of no real interest apart from being one of the relatively few novels written by a woman during this period.[151] The narrator anticipates the melancholy romantic of later novels who enjoys the gloomier prospects of savage nature and takes masochistic pleasure in his misery; like Prévost's man of quality, he withdraws to a monastery, "and that my whole life would be spent in the exercise of affliction administered me some consolation" (162). In fact it reads like something Prévost might have knocked out in a fortnight to buy Lenki some new jewelry.

Tencin hosted a popular literary salon that was attended by the leading novelists of the day: Montesquieu, Marivaux, Prévost, and Crébillon's good friend Charles Pinot-Duclos (1704–72), who published two short novels at the beginning of the 1740s that provocatively dramatize both forms of libertinism, philosophical and sexual. *The Story of Madame de Luz* (*Histoire de la baronne de Luz*, 1741), set for no particular reason at the beginning of the 17th century, is the brutal, cynical story "of a woman destroyed by her own virtue."[152] Married "when little more than a child" (that is, around age 12) to a much older man whom she respects but doesn't care for, platonically in love with the cousin she grew up with—the admirable Marquis de Saint Geran—the young baroness is raped three times over the next five or six years: first by a magistrate who holds incriminating evidence against her traitorous husband that he'll trade for sex, forcing himself on the girl when she refuses; second by a friend who

stumbles across her unconscious and nearly naked after bathing in a river and is "swept away by a burning desire impossible to resist" (59); and third by her "spiritual advisor," who is used to dealing with older women repenting their profligate youth, not alluring teenagers. Stalking her like a Crébillon libertine, he drugs her with opium and then has his way with her, waking her with his "violent embraces and furious convulsions" (74). Ashamed by these multiple assaults, the teen wastes away; even the death of her husband and the consequent opportunity to marry her childhood sweetheart doesn't prevent her from dying, though not before she tells devoted Saint Geran of her rapes. He vows to avenge her, but in a final ironic twist, all three rapists elude him and *he* suffers a stroke and dies, "with the name of his beloved on his lips" (80).

Belittling virtue and duty, the novel's sarcastic narrator challenges the guiding principles of earlier novelists and their self-sacrificial heroines. "A virtuous woman doesn't seem to fit into the scheme of things," he observes in the opening line. "So, since it's so difficult to be virtuous, what's the point? Even if she succeeds in remaining virtuous, society will regard her as odd: men will ignore her or avoid her company, while women will indulge in malicious gossip behind her back" (3). Though she doesn't love the husband arranged for her, she feels it's her duty to be faithful to him, but "Mother nature will always take precedence over duty," the narrator notes, "which in any case often involves resisting her" (9). The narrator implies that multiple rapes are what a woman can expect if she clings to unsociable, unnatural notions like virtue and duty: "Torn by remorse, she failed to realize that it was caused less by her crime than by her virtue itself" (62). He enjoys rubbing reality in her face, most notably in the scene where the lusty magistrate counters her threat to complain to the king by giving her a three-page lecture on how the law *really* works (33–36; Duclos studied law when younger, though he spent most of that time chasing women and tangling with the police). Of the two suitors who later take an interest in her, an obnoxious one and a nice one, it's the nice one who rapes her by the river, and it's the *spiritual* advisor who is the real libertine of the novel. Not surprisingly, several critics have noted that this tale of the misfortunes of virtue anticipates Sade's *Justine*.

Shifting from the third-person historical novel to the first-person memoir-novel, *The Confessions of the Comte de* *** (1742) takes the same form as

Manon Lescaut: a man pushing 40 tells a visiting younger man why he has abandoned his promiscuous life in Paris for a solitary one in the country, shared only with "a true friend" (84). As a rich, handsome teenager with the right connections, the count was introduced to society sex by an older woman, began sowing oats while in the army with "garrison ladies" and a woman he meets in Spain (whose husband he kills), then returns to Paris to tramp through a cattle call of coquettes (mostly married women), sows more oats in Italy and England (where he drives a woman to suicide), then back to Paris to bed more social butterflies, ballerinas, hypocritically pious women, and lawyers' and bankers' wives during the swinging Regency, including a salon hostess based on the Marquise de Tencin. Eventually deciding to trade up from pleasure to love, he begins courting a reserved young widow named Mme de Selves; she seems to reform the rake and clean him up for marriage, but he backslides into his tomcatting ways. Remarkably, she patiently waits until he gets it out of his system, and when the count finally sobers up from the "reckless intoxication of the senses" (191), he marries her and they retire to his country estate. Mme de Selves turns out to be the "true friend" sharing his solitude.

Possessing "a good heart, a true heart, but a frivolous mind," as his future wife tells him (188), the count is less a cold-blooded libertine than a warm-hearted man-about-town with a healthy libido (like Duclos himself in the 1720s). The women he consorts with are as promiscuous as he is—no need to rape, as in Duclos's earlier novel—and in one instance when a beautiful 16-year-old is offered to him in gratitude for a loan to a distressed widow, he magnanimously refuses and arranges for her to marry her sweetheart. The novel was enormously popular in its time, but only partly, I suspect, because it's the "true confessions" of a dashing playboy who eventually finds true love with a good woman. Rather, the count's uncensored candor gives the reader the impression she's getting the inside scoop on the sexcapades of the upper classes. In conversation, Duclos was notorious for his blunt talk, which he deploys in the novel to create realistic effects not seen in the French novel since Challe's *Illustrious Frenchwomen*. Marivaux would never have referred to "the anemic chalky complexion of a rather suspect blonde" (146), and even Crébillon wouldn't have casually noted that a woman's husband "had become rather heavily involved with a young man and had drifted away from her" (113). Though the count isn't explicit

about his sexual encounters, he is about cultural matters, and his straight talk allows us to realize how little people have changed over the centuries. During the Regency, France suffered an economic disaster as bad as the crash of 2008, which was caused by *exactly* the same kind of people: back then, "whatever his background, a man could launch himself into the money business determined to make a fortune without any special aptitude other than basic greed and avarice, no scruples as to how sordid the work might be at the start, a conscience free of any qualms as to the methods he would use and, having made his pile, no thought of remorse" (141). And today's *Sex and the City* wannabes resemble their Regency sisters so closely as to question evolution:

> [T]his is a species of woman who has no principles, passions, or ideas. She can't think and yet imagines she can feel; her mind and her heart are equally cold and vapid. She's interested only in trivia and talks in platitudes, which she thinks are original ideas. She brings everything back to herself or to some other petty detail which has attracted her attention. She likes to appear knowledgeable and thinks she is indispensable. She's in her element when quibbling, her main interests lie in jewelry, fashion, and clothes in general. She'll interrupt an interesting conversation to point out that this year's taffeta is in appalling taste and a disgrace for the whole country. She takes a lover in the same way as she chooses a dress, because it's the fashion. (155)

Duclos's gallery of not-so-illustrious Frenchwomen and the count's caustic cultural criticism are accompanied by some memorable maxims, such as "Women should never complain about men, we are what they have made us" (165–66). *The Confessions of the Comte de* *** isn't a great novel, but its frank tone impressed Duclos's friend Rousseau (who may have titled his *Confessions* after it), and it left its scent on Diderot and Laclos.

Duclos's *Confessions* appears, and that maxim illustrated, in what must be the most precious libertine novel ever, *The Fairy Doll* (*La Poupée*, 1744) by Jean Galli de Bibiena (c. 1709–79). A stinging satire on foppish abbés and a primer on how a gentleman should treat a woman, it concerns an inexperienced abbé named Philandre who is rescued from his ludicrous attempts to impress the ladies by a sylphid—an elemental being (actually a

cleaned-up succubus) popularized by Abbé de Villars's *Comte de Gabalis.* Having failed to seduce any society women, Philandre is about to rent a shopgirl's hourly affections when he is transfixed and aroused by a beautiful eight-inch doll in her shop—the form the sylphid Zamire assumed to attract his attention. It's love at first sight, especially when he dishevels her clothes and notices she's anatomically correct. After he gets her home, the doll comes to life and, seating herself on a copy of Duclos's *Confessions*, explains that sylphs attain immortality only after they fall in love with a human and—more importantly—cure him of his "faults and follies."[153] She explains how she wasted four months on an irredeemably vain abbé in a comic adventure featuring Clitandre and Julie from Crébillon's *Opportunities of a Night*, then goes to work on Philandre.

Zamire grows taller at each stage of Philandre's redemption, beginning when he wipes off his man-makeup and renounces his various foppish affectations. When she reaches the height of a five-year-old, Philandre nervously explains that his ardor disappeared, lest anyone suspect a priest of pedophilia, but it reignites when she's the size of a 14-year-old. The living doll lectures him on how "rational" women want to be treated—not "the empty-headed and disreputable ones" (117), who seem to prefer douchebags—and stresses the importance of allowing women to dominate a relationship, especially after marriage. Philandre goes along with all this, and is rewarded with a full-grown 16-year-old beauty in his arms. But when he abandons "delicacy" and "became silent, sullen, and bold, and I tried to plunge straight into the full intoxication of the senses" (143), the lady vanishes. He apologizes, she rematerializes, and taking things at *her* tempo, he loses his virginity and she attains immortality. It's all very smart and charming, and (I'll confess) kind of hot.

The Fairy Doll has a Russian doll structure: the narrator is writing down a story he overheard Philandre tell his lawyer-friend one day, and which the narrator already told the woman for whom he's writing this. In the center of the novel is the long story-within-a-story Zamire tells Philandre about the other irredeemable abbé. In a sense, the whole thing is the narrator's demonstration to the woman who requested it that he too has learned his lesson about how to treat women, and who's in charge: "be good enough to remember that I have obeyed you" (153) he ends his work, hoping to be

rewarded as passionately as Philandre was. All silliness of sylphs aside, Galli de Bibiena reiterates Duclos's maxim that women have the Lysistratan power to shape male behavior, if only they had the will to wield that power more often.

Duclos was also a friend and literary advisor of Françoise de Graffigny (1695–1758), who after a rough early life took up creative writing in her forties; attending a performance in 1743 of Voltaire's Incan tragedy *Alzire* and following it up with Garcilaso de la Vega's 17th-century *Royal Commentaries of Peru*, she wrote a subversive epistolary novel entitled *Letters from a Peruvian Woman* (*Lettres d'un Péruvienne*, 1747; rev. ed. 1752) that became a surprise best-seller and, after a long period of neglect, has been deservedly crowned a feminist classic. In 41 letters written over the course of about two years' time, the Incan princess Zilia tells how she was abducted from the Temple of the Sun by "savages" (Spaniards) on what was to have been her wedding day to a prince of the realm named Aza, and then shipped to Europe, only to be rescued after a sea battle by a benevolent Frenchman named Déterville, who falls in love with the young girl and installs her in his family's home in Paris. Grateful to him but devoted to Aza, she gets Déterville to track him down in Spain, where he has converted to Catholicism. (She remains faithful to the sun-god of the Inca.) Aza travels up to France only to tell her his new religion forbids him from marrying her (they're related), though in truth he has fallen for some señorita; the unrequited lover Déterville has traveled to Malta to drown his sorrows, and in her final letters Zilia urges him to return to France, not to take Aza's place in her heart (which will always belong to him), but to become her platonic friend and intellectual companion.

The ending upset readers of the time, who expected a conventional ending: either marriage to devoted Déterville or reconciliation and marriage to her true love Aza, but Zilia is not a conventional girl and this is not a conventional novel. First, Graffigny combined two hitherto-segregated types of epistolary novel: the romantic confessions of women (*Letters of a Portuguese Nun* etc.) and the cultural criticism of foreign men (*Persian Letters* etc.). The first half of *Letters from a Peruvian Woman* follows the female version as Zilia pines for Aza to the point where she contemplates suicide, but after she's been in France long enough to get the lay of the land, she turns into a caustic social commentator, upbraiding the upper-classes for

their frivolity, insincerity, hypocrisy, and especially their demeaning treatment of women. And to a far greater degree than her male predecessors, Graffigny deploys enstrangement to sharpen her criticism and to convey a foreigner's disorientation. When she was hustled under cover of darkness on board the Spanish galleon—a vehicle she had no prior knowledge of—she is baffled by a "house" that was "not fixed to the ground, but seemed to be somehow suspended, in a state of perpetual rocking."[154] She uses alien imagery, as when describing the difference between her Spanish and French captors: "The stern and fierce appearance of my first abductors shows that they were made from the same substance as the hardest metals; the men before me now seem to have slipped from the Creator's hands before he had done more than assemble for their composition just air and fire" (4). Once in France—which she initially assumes is an outpost of the Incan empire—she describes its people and customs in the same terms an ethnocentric Spaniard would use to describe the heathen Inca, heightening their ridiculousness. As daring as any libertine of the time, Zilia zings Catholicism: "As for the origins and principles of this religion, they did not seem to me any more incredible than the story of *Mancocapa,* and of the lake *Tisicaca*," she admits, but she sees such a "striking inconsistency" between Catholicism and its followers "that my reason flatly refuses to believe" it (21). She prefers her own nature-based religion to the "illusions" of that "strange" system (38).

The one aspect of French culture she approves of is "a kind of writing they call *books*" (20); she is surprised at how shabbily the authors of these noble works are treated, but she devours them, for "I seek enlightenment with an urgency which quite consumes me" (9), which was impossible to fulfill back in Peru. Not only does she become intellectually superior to almost everyone around her, but she becomes an author herself: her letters progress from romantic distress signals to clear-eyed essays on French culture and the subjugation of women, discovering herself in the process and deriving much therapeutic value from writing. Since she's not aware of Aza's whereabouts until later in the novel, she retains her letters with the intention of presenting them to him later as a record of her devotion; keeping them after he spurns her, they become an autobiographical novel of

female enlightenment, complete with ethnological footnotes about Incan customs.[155]

Running through this exotic bildungsroman is a touching story of unrequited love, made heartbreakingly poignant by Zilia's comically enstranged account. After Déterville rescues her, the smitten man visits her in her cabin; comparing him to an Incan *Cacique* ("a kind of provincial governor," a footnote informs us), Zilia is puzzled by French courtship:

> The *Cacique* seems to want to imitate our Inca ceremonies on the day of *Raymi;** he kneels down very close to my bed, he stays for quite some time in this uncomfortable position; sometimes he remains silent, and with downcast eyes he seems lost in deep contemplation. . . .
>
> Could it be that his nation worships idols? I have so far seen no adoration of the Sun; perhaps women are the object of their devotion. Before the great *Manco-Capuc*** brought down to earth the will of the Sun, our ancestors made gods of anything which struck fear in them or brought them pleasure: perhaps these savages feel those two emotions just for women. (5)
>
> * The *Raymi*, principal festival of the Sun: the Inca and the priests worshipped the Sun on their knees.
>
> ** First lawgiver of the Indians. See *Histoire des Incas* [by Garcilaso].

Before she had learned French, Déterville playfully/pitifully taught her to say "Yes, I love you" and "I promise to be yours" (9), but this little joke comes back to haunt him the first time he sees her all dolled up in French fashion. Still unaware of what she's actually saying, she repeats "those words he so enjoyed having me repeat. I even endeavored to give them the tone he gives them":

> I do not know what effect they had on him at that moment, but his eyes lit up, his cheeks reddened, he came towards me with an agitated look, he seemed to want to take me in his arms. Then, stopping suddenly, he took my hand and shook it firmly, saying with emotion in his voice, *No . . . respect . . . her virtue . . .* and several other words which I understand no

> better. And then he hastened to the other side of the room and threw himself onto his chair, where he remained, his head buried in his hands, and showing every sign of deep despair. (12)

Treating her like a goddess, respecting her virtue, arranging her reunion with her fiancé (but leaving for Malta before he arrives), Déterville is a sympathetic character whose descent into the darkness of unrequited love shadows Zilia's ascent to enlightenment to moving effect.

Déterville converts the Incan gold the Spaniards had stolen from Zilia into money to buy her a small house, where this unconventional woman can live an independent life outside France's social structure. Earlier, she had worried "I have neither gold, nor lands, nor occupation, yet I must be one of the citizens of this town. Oh heavens! in what class should I place myself?" (20), but by the end she is content to live apart from people, blind to the "pleasure of being" (41), because she now has a room of her own. As Showalter notes in his superb biography, Graffigny upset the majority of critics and reviewers with that ending, and others rushed in to write sequels with conventional happy endings, but she defiantly retained it when she issued a slightly revised edition five years later, trusting that readers would eventually see its rightness. It only took about 200 years.

The Marquis d'Argens (1704–71) had written some letter-novels a few years earlier modeled on Marana's *Turkish Spy* and Montesquieu's *Persian Letters—Jewish Letters, Chinese Letters,* and *Cabalist Letters*—but hit paydirt with his revolutionary 1748 novel *Thérèse the Philosopher*. Crébillon's and Duclos's soft-core style got harder in the hands of this libertine, who appropriated the language of pornography for his radical project. Like other Enlightenment philosophers, d'Argens regarded the novel as a convenient vehicle for his countercultural views and one that would reach a larger audience than the libertine pamphlets passed around at the time. And he was right: *Thérèse the Philosopher* was one of the best-selling French novels of the 18th century.

Asked by her aristocratic lover of 10 years to write the story of her life before she met him, perhaps to reinvigorate their flagging relationship, middle-class Thérèse begins with a bitter account of how, at age 11, she was brainwashed by a priest into thinking sex is dirty, in terms that would be funny if not still used by some benighted people today:

> "Never, never," he said to me, "place your hand or even your eyes upon that filthy place where you piss, which is nothing more than the apple that seduced Adam, and which has brought about the damnation of mankind through original sin. It is infested by the devil; *there* is his dwelling place, *there* his throne! Beware you are not taken by surprise by this enemy of God and man. Nature will soon cover that part with a vile coat, like that which covers ferocious beasts, by this punishment to mark it as the part of shame, of sin, of oblivion. Guard more carefully against the bit of flesh of boys your age who want to amuse you in the barn. That is the serpent, my daughter, which tempted Eve, our first mother. Never let your look or your touch be soiled by that evil creature. It would sting and bite you until sooner or later it would devour you completely!"[156]

This scares her into a convent, where she wastes away until age 25, when she emerges "half dead" from a life of austerities, flagellations, and abstinence: "The whole machine was run down. My complexion was yellow, my lips white; I looked like a living skeleton" (14). Guessing at the kind of oil needed to get the machine back into working order, a "clever doctor" advices her to get married, but still frightened of the serpent's bite, she is tempted to adopt the spiritual exercises of her religiose friend Eradice, on whom (at her invitation) she spies as she is literally whipped into mystical ecstasy by her spiritual advisor, who then fucks her from behind with the "cord of St. Francis," as he calls his phallus. (Reading like a masochistic sex fantasy, their relationship was based on a scandal of the early 1730s; d'Argens's father had a role in the priest's trial.) Roguishly using religious imagery to describe the scene, sex-starved Thérèse is tempted to seek the same kind of spiritual guidance, but fortunately meets two freethinking friends of her mother—an abbé and a widow—who inspire her to reject religion, adopt deterministic materialism, and to masturbate. Regaining her health, her breasts grow "to the point that they'd well fill the hand of an honest ecclesiastic," the abbé notes with approval (49).

After she travels to Paris and loses her mother, Thérèse is taken under the wing of a bawd named Manon(!) Bois-Laurier, who encourages her to become a prostitute. She fights off the first customer who tries to occupy Satan's throne, then is conveniently rescued by a count who honors her

childhood fear of intercourse and its threat of pregnancy—which often resulted in death in those days—and settles for mutual masturbation until, inflamed by his collection of erotic fiction and art, she goes all the way, avoiding the possibility of pregnancy by the count's honorable use of the withdrawal method.

Except for chapter 4, in which Bois-Laurier tells the story of her life—a bawdy tale in the spirit of Boccaccio and Aretino—the novel is more philosophic than erotic (and even that sequence is more comic than erotic). Thérèse attends or overhears several lectures on libertine philosophy, especially regarding religion. A moderate deist, the abbot believes a benevolent god created the universe and set it in motion, then withdrew and no longer intervenes or responds to his creation. Religious doctrines and practices were invented by men to gain power and to control the populace. Sex is natural, not the satanic crime Thérèse's first confessor made it out to be, and masturbation is the easiest and least disruptive way to satisfy the itch for sex. (At times the novel reads like a philosophical pamphlet on sexual hygiene.) After listening to one of the abbé's lectures, Thérèse does something no previous heroine in literary history claimed to do: "It was at that moment that I really began, for the first time in my life, to think" (62).

Despite its erotic content, *Thérèse the Philosopher* was intended less to titillate its readers than to make them think, to rinse out of their heads the brainwashing they endured as children. The reader occupies the same voyeuristic, eavesdropping position as Thérèse, and the author hopes we too will learn to think, and to reevaluate what we were taught about sex and religion as kids. And apparently it worked. In Robert Darnton's lengthy chapter on d'Argens's novel in *The Forbidden Best-Sellers of Pre-Revolutionary France*, he argues that its wholesome encouragement of masturbation and frank talk on contraception may be partly responsible for the fact that, unlike other countries in Europe, "France adopted birth control on a massive scale and at an early date" (408n54). A protofeminist, Thérèse's declaration of independence from her childhood prejudices and consequent commitment to the pursuit of happiness contributed to the revolutionary fervor stirred up by the Enlightenment; I wouldn't be surprised to learn d'Argens's novel was in the library of Thomas Jefferson or Benjamin Franklin. The ideas in *Thérèse the Philosopher* aren't original—indeed, some of the abbé's arguments against organized religion were

plagiarized from a 1745 pamphlet, as Darnton shows (108)—but d'Argens's unusual hybrid of bildungsroman-cum-philosophical treatise-cum-sex manual stands out from the typical erotica of the time.[157] The Marquis de Sade was indifferent to libertine novels like those of Crébillon and Duclos —"They wrapped cynicism and immorality in an agreeable, playful, and sometimes even philosophical style, and at least pleased their readers if they did not instruct them"[158]—but he admired d'Argens's novel, which his adventuress Juliette comes across in a depraved monk's library: "*Thérèse philosophe was there, a charming performance from the pen of the Marquis d'Argens, alone to have discerned the possibilities of the genre, though only partially realizing them; alone to have achieved happy results from the combining of lust and impiety. These, speedily placed before the public, and in the shape the author had initially conceived them, finally gave us an idea of what an immoral book could be" (Juliette, 462).* Actually, d'Argens regarded his novel not as immoral but as a charter for a new morality based on reason rather than religious superstition; Barry Ivker puts it better than Juliette: "*Thérèse philosophe* is the first libertine novel in which the erotic and philosophic elements are totally integrated. The heroine's philosophic inquiries exactly parallel her discoveries in the sexual realm" (231). Unlike Sade, Dostoevsky disliked d'Argens's novel: he refers to it in *The Gambler* (1866) and dramatizes his reservations about its libertine values in his later, greater novels.[159]

Though many more French novels were published in the 1740s than during the bountiful '30s—352 versus 249 according to Jones's *List* (xiv)—far fewer hold interest today. On the other hand, the late '40s saw the debut of the two greatest French novelists of the 18th century.

Voltaire disdained novels. He thought they were a waste of time, both to read and to write. For the man born François-Marie Arouet (1694–1778), novels were for "frivolous youth," as he harrumphed in his "Essay on Epic Poetry" (1733); "people of real literary taste despise them." He read them, but rarely referred to them in his letters and notebooks, and when he did it was to disparage them, with a few exceptions. (He admired Lafayette's

Zayde and enjoyed Crébillon's *Skimmer*.) "Voltaire seems to have been largely indifferent, if not positively hostile, to the major works of fiction which appeared during the eighteenth century," writes Steve Larkin, adding that he "appears to have been either uninterested in, or profoundly out of sympathy with, fiction in general" (127–28). For one thing, Voltaire was a classicist, which meant only poetry and drama qualified as literature; he was among those who still regarded fiction as not only an inconsequential form of entertainment but a dangerously misleading one: he felt novels gave a false view of things, the same objection he had against the Bible. For another, he valued brevity and had no patience for the lumbering pace and literary padding of most novels. But after achieving great success in both poetry and drama, he realized in his fifties that the novel would be a suitable vehicle for his views, a "frivolous" medium he could have some serious fun with. Customizing it to his taste, he chopped the vehicle down to its chassis so that it could race while other novels strolled, hit and run while others stayed and talked. He set out to write novels that could "give pleasure even to those who hate romances," as his first published novel promises in its farcical Seal of Approval.[160] Like Charles Sorel a century earlier, "he infiltrates the world of romance the better to destroy it and to replace it with fictions of a more authentic kind."[161] Voltaire had no idea that, after he died, these despairing joyrides would leave his poetry and drama in the dust.

Brevity is the soul of wit, and his novels are both witty and brief—so brief, in fact, it's a question how many of his 26 *contes* qualify as novels. The longest barely reach the 100-page mark, and the rest are much shorter. There's no universally accepted page minimum (see p. 32 of my previous volume), but since numbered chapters are a traditional formal marker of the novel, they allow us to classify a dozen of his fictions as novels—or novellas, novelettes, mininovels, *comme vous voulez.* Since they're largely unknown (apart from the incomparable *Candide*), and since I don't plan to discuss them in detail, they're summarized here in order of publication:

- *Zadig* (*Zadig, ou la destinée*, 1748). In ancient Babylon, an intelligent, prosperous man named Zadig is repeatedly thwarted in his search for happiness by ridiculous people. No good deed of his

goes unpunished. After a variety of trials and tribulations, assured by an angel that things happen for a reason—"Everything is either a test or a punishment, a reward or a precaution" (COS 191)—Zadig marries his beloved and becomes king of Babylon.

- *The World As It Is* (*Le Monde comme il va*, 1748). A genie is tempted to punish the Persian citizens of Persepolis for their folly, so he sends a sharp Scythian named Babouc to visit the city and render an impartial judgment. (For Persepolis read Paris.) Learning of its economic, judicial, and military policies, visiting churches and theaters, conversing with wits and scholars, he is convinced "the bad abounds and the good is rare" (M 46). But gradually Babouc's black-and-white view of things turns gray with complexity, and he grows "attached to this city whose inhabitants were civilized, gentle and benevolent, even if they were frivolous, scandal-mongering and full of vanity" (M 50–51). Babouc convinces the genie to spare the city and to accept the world as it is.
- *Micromegas* (*Micromégas*, 1751). An Earthling tells the story of a brilliant young giant from the star Sirius; traveling to broaden his mind, Micromegas first visits Saturn and converses with an academic about philosophical matters and their cultural differences. Then the two tour the solar system, arriving on Earth on 5 July 1737. After the 23-mile-high giant detects life and devises a way to communicate with the microbic inhabitants, he learns they are mostly "a confederacy of the mad, the bad and the miserable" (M 32). He promises to enlighten them by writing "a fine work of philosophy," but after he leaves they discover the book contains "nothing but blank pages" (M 35).
- *Candide* (*Candide, ou l'optimisme*, 1759). A good-hearted naïf, attracted to both the "plump and appetizing" Cunégonde and the optimistic philosophy of a tutor of "metaphysico-theologico-cosmo-nigology" named Pangloss, wanders through Europe, South America, and back. Beaten by a "chain of calamities" (C 83), he winds up on a small farm outside Constantinople and abandons Pangloss's thesis that everything always works out for

the best in this "best of all possible worlds," preferring to mind his own business.

- *Potpourri* (*Pot-pourri*, 1765). The narrator alternates between reading a puzzling story by Merry Hissing of the development of a puppet troupe (a *Tale of a Tub*by allegory of the history of Christianity) and discussing current religious abuses with his friends.
- *The Ingenu* (*L'Ingénu*, 1767). In 1689, a sensible young Huron (nicknamed "the Ingenu" for his candor) travels from Canada to the boondocks of Brittany, meets his unknown uncle and aunt, and falls in love with a local girl. Their attempts to civilize and convert this noble savage are amusing, but things get ugly when he gets caught up in the religious conflicts of the time; because of some ingenuous remarks, he is arrested for being anti-Jesuit/pro-Protestant and thrown in jail for a year. There he educates himself with the help of his Jansenist cellmate until his fiancée springs him by sacrificing her virginity to an influential Jesuit. She literally dies of shame, and having learned the ways of the world, the Ingenu is "an Ingenu no longer" (COS 262).
- *The Man with Forty Crowns* (*L'Homme aux quarante écus*, 1768). The story of a farmer named André who overcomes the challenge of getting by on 40 *écus* a year to become a well-respected Parisian *philosophe*. The formally diverse novella includes speculative dialogues on economics, theories of human reproduction, and syphilis; an anonymous letter warning André against financial journals; diatribes and parables; pages "from the manuscript of an old man retired from the world" in which the Christian deity is informed of the latest findings in natural science; an essay on proportion; literary quarrels; extracts from a 1766 pamphlet by Voltaire on a case of injustice, and more—plus footnotes.[162]
- *The Princess of Babylon* (*La Princesse de Babylone*, 1768). In ancient Babylon, a heroic adventurer from India named Amazan wins a competition for the hand of Princess Formosante, but news that his father is dying sends him home before he can marry her.

She goes in search of him, but when he hears a false rumor that she's been unfaithful, he goes off on a world tour to teach her "to conquer her passions by his example" (CT 2:138), rejecting the advances of the women he meets along the way until he sleeps with a Parisian chorus girl. (The temporal setting morphs from ancient times to the 18th century and back.) Formosante catches Amazan in bed, so then he follows after *her*, rescues her from the Inquisition, and they return in triumph to Babylon. The novella ends with the author invoking the Muses to prevent bad reviews and unauthorized sequels.

- *The Letters of Amabed* (*Les Lettres d'Amabed*, 1769). An epistolary novella set in 1512–13 in which the Brahman Amabed and his bride exchange letters with his father about their sleazy dealings with a Portuguese missionary, Father Fa tutto. When Amabed tells officials that the missionary raped his wife (and her maid), Fa futto counters by accusing them of apostasy, and all three are shipped from India to Rome to let the pope decide their case. During the voyage Amabed learns more about Fa futto's religion—this novella is Voltaire's most virulent attack on Catholicism—but after he reaches Rome and is feted by the worldly religious establishment—Pope Leo X slaps him and his wife on their butts after their audience—he succumbs to Roman ways and abandons his correspondence when he and his wife are invited to a bisexual romp in the country. (When in Rome. . . .) Again the author warns against spurious sequels.
- *The White Bull* (*Le Taureau blanc*, 1773–74). In Egypt in the 6th century bce, 24-year-old Princess Amaside bewails her missing lover Nebuchadnezzar, whom the Jewish god metamorphosed into a white bull seven years earlier, and who now (unknown to her) follows her around, accompanied by many other magical animals from the Bible. Threatened with death by her father if she utters the Babylonian king's name, Amaside accidentally blurts it out while the serpent from Genesis is telling her a story, and is saved from death only because the Egyptian gods want the white bull to take the place of their dead bull-god Apis. His seven-year-curse up, the bull metamorphoses back into Nebuchadnezzar, who

marries the princess and returns to Babylon. In this Monty Pythonesque spoof of the Old Testament, the prophets Daniel, Ezekiel, and Jeremiah have cameos—they get drunk and complain prophesyin' ain't easy—before being metamorphosed into magpies.

- *Lord Chesterfield's Ears and Parson Goodman* (*Les Oreilles du comte de Chesterfield et le chapelain Goudman* [*sic*], 1775). In England in 1773, Parson Goodman misses out on both a vicarage and a wife because his deaf patron Lord Chesterfield mishears his request. Goodman is impressed by his lordship's physician, Mr. Sidrac, and abandons theology "to study nature under his direction" to console himself (M 94). Along with Sidrac's world-traveler friend Dr. Grou, the three carry on conversations that might have been heard in Shandy Hall. A twist of fate allows Goodman to get the vicarage and the girl, and he "became one of the most terrible priests in England" (M 110).
- *Johnny's Story* (*Histoire de Jenni, ou le sage et l'athée*, 1775). A friend of a man named Freind tells another friend of the trouble Freind had raising his prodigal son Johnny: first in Spain in 1705, where he was almost roasted by the Inquisition, next in London, where he fell in with a gang of libertines, and then in Pennsylvania, where the gang went slumming. The second half of the novella is a theological debate between the deist Freind (expressing Voltaire's views) and Johnny's atheist friend Birton.[163] Freind converts Birton and reforms Johnny, who accompanies his father back to England and marries the respectable girl Johnny thought his libertine girlfriend had poisoned.

Didactic, message-heavy novels—as these unarguably are—usually take conventional form; there's nothing innovative or experimental about *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, for example, or *Atlas Shrugged*. What's different about Voltaire's fiction is that he pays as much attention to the medium as to the message, challenging and mocking the conventions of the novel while doing likewise with the conventions of society. Voltaire's admirable message is obvious: In these novels, as in his other writings, Voltaire calls

for an end to *l'infâme*, the outrages of his time:[164] tyranny, oppression, injustice, corruption, censorship, warmongering, closed-mindedness, and above all religion, which (he demonstrates relentlessly) combines all of the above.[165] It's disheartening to realize that all of these abuses are in full force today—and, like the poor, will be with us always. His Ingenu identifies the true villains in the world's theater of misery: "On such a large stage the vast majority of innocent, peaceable human beings continually fade into the background. The leading characters are invariably depraved men of ambition" (COS 238). Reading history "depresses him," but it's entertaining to watch Voltaire rage against the machine and invent clever new ways of getting his message out. What still delights us about these novels, what makes them both intellectually and aesthetically stimulating, is not so much their subject matter as their sardonic manner. Many of the specific controversies he attacks are old news, but his purpose is still valid: "to foster a spirit of irreverence and to instill in the reader a habit of mind with which he or she may embark upon the independent pursuit of wisdom" (Pearson, ix).

Since Voltaire didn't take novels very seriously, he felt free to mix and match genres and to play havoc with their conventions. Nearly every popular genre of the time has a booth at his carnival: the faux-Arabian tale (Voltaire claimed to have read *The Arabian Nights* 14 times and enjoyed Anthony Hamilton's tales), picaresque, bildungsroman, the sentimental novel, parody, allegory, learned wit, metafiction, epistolary fiction, the memoir-novel, fairy tales, romantic adventure, *conte philosophique*, the historical novel, utopian fiction, the fantastic journey, the historical novel, chivalric romance, Platonic dialogue, Menippean satire, and science fiction.[166] There are no purebred examples of these genres among Voltaire's works: they're all mixed breeds. For example, *The Ingenu*—which is the closest thing he wrote to a conventional novel—begins with a spoof of hagiography, then sports with comic cloistral fiction (the genre of the outsider who disrupts a community), flirts with romance with risqué rimshots, turns into a serious philosophical bildungsroman as the Ingenu educates himself in jail, and finally darkens to sentimental tragedy when his fiancée trades sex for his release and dies. *The Princess of Babylon* starts off as a by-the-rules Oriental fairy tale with elements of chivalric romance,

tosses out the rules for an allegorical, surrealistically anachronistic travelogue, returns to its genre roots for the traditional wedding, then concludes with some metafictional persiflage. The most formally inventive ones—*Potpourri* and *The Man with Forty Crowns*—defy genre classification. (If *Micromegas* is a mini *Gulliver's Travels*, then *Potpourri* is Voltaire's *Tale of a Tub*, which he admired as much as Swift's more popular work.[167])

Voltaire satirizes some of the games novelists play with their readers, like pretending a novel is translated from an ancient tongue (Chaldean in the cases of *Zadig* and *The Princess of Babylon*), or is taken from an incomplete manuscript (*Zadig* again and *Letters of Amabed*); at one point in *Micromegas* the narrator claims the Inquisition censored a portion (M 23). Five of the twelve novels are ascribed to fake authors, including a few of Voltaire's critics. He mocks the incredible coincidences in romantic adventure novels, their interpolated stories, their coy pretenses to authenticity. Ignoring novelistic conventions, he gleefully commits glaring anachronisms, slyly cites his own writings, cracks inside jokes, upsets reader expectations, and indulges in learned wit that he knew would be over the heads of most readers, as this aside at the beginning of the debate in *Johnny's Story* indicates: "On hearing these words of the infinite, space, Homer, commentators, the goodman Parouba [a Maryland Indian] and his daughter, and even some of the English, evinced a desire to go and take the air on deck; but, Freind having promised to be intelligible, they remained; and I explained in a low tone to Parouba some slightly scientific words, which people born upon the Blue Ridge could not be expected to understand quite as readily as the doctors of Oxford and Cambridge" (CT 1:146–47). As the last sentence indicates, Voltaire draws upon new findings in science—and their belittling implications for man's place in the universe—as well as old arguments in philosophy and theology.[168] Sometimes Voltaire includes footnotes in a low tone to help out his Blue Ridge readers with the encyclopedic range of his references, but most of the time they're on their own, tightening their seatbelts as old man Voltaire joyrides through Novelland.

And the point of it all? To make us better readers, to turn us from Blue Ridge hillbillies into Oxbridge dons when it comes to reading, and to make

novels worthy of the attention even of those (like Voltaire) "who hate romances." The Seal of Approval that makes that promise is followed by a dedicatory epistle from the Persian poet Sa'di (d. 1292) to Sultana Sheraa, recommending *Zadig* as "a work which sayeth more than it may appear to say," alerting the reader to pay attention. Voltaire mocks the fad for Oriental fiction as Sa'di goes on to say:

> It was translated into Arabic for the amusement of the celebrated Sultan Ouloug-Beg. This was about the time that the Arabs and the Persians were beginning to write the *Thousand and One Nights*, the *Thousand and One Days*, etc. Ouloug preferred *Zadig*; but the sultanas were fonder of the *Thousand and One Nights.* "How can thee possibly," wise Ouloug would say to them, "prefer stories that make no sense and have no point?"—"That is precisely why we do like them," would come the sultanas' reply.
>
> I flatter myself that thou wilt not be as they, and that thou wilt be a real Ouloug. (COS 123–24)[169]

Voltaire wants his readers to be like wise Ouloug, not like the silly sultanas, and dramatizes the point by introducing in his first novel a man who makes "a special study of the properties of animals and plants, and soon developed an acuteness of perception which revealed to him a thousand differences where other men see only uniformity" (COS 131). That acuteness of perception allows him to amaze everyone with his Sherlock Holmesian powers of deduction in chapter 3 (and of course, this being a Voltaire novel, religious people want to burn him as a sorcerer) and encourages the reader to watch for and analyze clues in the text to discover what more it may be saying than it appears to say.

Often this means seeing through the thin Oriental veil to identify Voltaire's references to current European events and controversies—harder for us today than for his first readers—but more importantly he's trying to encourage critical thinking in general, which can only come from academic study. Virtually every novel of his features a character not merely learning from experience, as in conventional novels, but deliberately educating himself (often symbolically paralleled by a quest or journey): Zadig studies nature; Babouc not only studies Persepolian culture but reads its books,

including its latest novels (which he finds "devoid of imagination" and throws in the fire); Micromegas goes on a study-abroad program; the protagonist of *Potpourri* studies a puzzling text and reads theological history; the Ingenu educates himself in prison; the man with 40 crowns elevates himself by reading voluminously (including a novel called *Candide*); Amazan abandons the princess of Babylon for fieldwork in cultural anthropology; Amabed studies the Bible and Italian culture; Princess Amaside has somehow read Locke and Petronius, and likes challenging fictions that, "from beneath the veil of the plot, reveal to the experienced eye some subtle truth that will escape the common herd" (COS 304); Parson Goodman studies nature under Mr. Sidrac and is tutored by Dr. Grou; and Freind draws upon his own wide reading to tutor his son and all who will listen on the principles of deism. In a few cases, education isn't enough to overcome a character's innate weakness—Amabed is seduced by a religious culture he learned to abhor, and despite his studies Parson Goodman becomes a bad priest—and Voltaire's novels are filled with well-read people like pedants, literary critics, and theologians whose prejudices cancel out the benefits of reading. But Voltaire makes it clear that book-knowledge is essential to understanding how the world works, and demonstrates that even novels can contribute to enlightenment when written by/read by a real Ouloug.

Voltaire's most famous character is not a reader. As a servant in a provincial baron's castle, Candide's only education comes from auditing lessons intended for the baron's gay nephew, unfortunately delivered by a ridiculously single-minded pedant. Unlike virtually every other Voltaire protagonist, Candide never supplements or corrects his miseducation with further reading or study, and eventually adopts a know-nothing, head-in-the-sand policy of ignorance toward intellectual matters. He ends up in Turkey, where a dervish tells him to repress his intellectual curiosity and "Be silent," and where another Turk admits total ignorance of and indifference to public affairs. These two antiintellectuals inspire Candide to remain as ignorant as a Westphalian peasant tilling his small plot of land. Though it's possible to argue that Candide has progressed "beyond disillusionment and despair to the re-affirmation of life in the community" (Bonneville, 145)—to pick one of several positive interpretations—everything Voltaire wrote implies Candide has failed. In Judeo-Christian

mythology, Adam and Eve were cursed for eating of the Tree of Knowledge; in Enlightenment mythology, people "should gorge themselves on the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge," as the serpent in *The White Bull* recommends. "Was the mind not created that it might enlighten itself, might improve itself?" (COS 285–86). Candide and his little band retreat to a life of antediluvian simplicity, cultivating a garden rather than their minds, and for Voltaire, that's a step backward, not forward.

Candide is the epitome of what Bonneville calls "Voltaire's experiments with the novelistic genre" (11). Like several of his other novels, it pretends to be a recovered manuscript translated from another language ("from the German of Dr. Ralph") and is a mongrel of several other breeds of fiction: the picaresque novel, the romantic adventure (Candide's devotion to Mademoiselle Cunégonde rivals that of any romantic hero), utopian fiction (chapters 17–18 are set in mythical El Dorado), outsider fiction (Candide is as baffled as Graffigny's Peruvienne by other cultures), and Menippean satire. The styles are equally diverse: there are some fairytale locutions at the beginning, sentimental novelese during the scenes of separation/false rumors/reunion of Candide and Cunégonde, and Rabelaisian burlesque throughout. But its principal style is realistic, and radically so for French novels of the time: the battlefield scenes in chapter 3 exhibit a degree of brutal realism not seen in a novel since Grimmelshausen's *Simplicissimus*, and the desolate description of Lisbon after the earthquake is unflinching in its horror.[170] There are multiple rapes, discussions of syphilis and slavery, thefts, beatings, executions, and even acts of cannibalism among other examples of dirty realism. These have a thematic purpose—to rub abstract philosophy's nose in the world as it is—but *Candide* displays a commitment to realism most novelists of the time, in France as elsewhere, were not ready to make.

Though *Candide* is Voltaire's longest novel, its 80 to 100 pages (depending on the edition) are a fraction of the length of most novels, which points to his greatest innovation, what Bonneville calls the art of "distillation" (15) and what Italo Calvino calls "velocity"; what most "enchants us" about *Candide*, the Italian novelists claims,

> is the sheer pace of the thing. With lightness and rapidity a whole series of disasters, tortures, and massacres scampers across the page, bounds from chapter to chapter, is ramified and multiplied, without afflicting the reader's emotions with any effect but that of an exhilarating and primordial vitality. If the three pages of chapter VIII suffice for Cunégonde to relate how, having had her father, mother, and brother hacked to pieces by the invaders, she was raped, disemboweled, cured, reduced to being a washerwoman, prostituted in Holland and Portugal, and shared on alternative days by two "protectors" of different faiths, and in this way happened to witness the *auto-de-fé* of which Pangloss and Candide were the victims, and finally to meet up with the latter again, less than two pages in chapter IX are needed for Candide to find himself with two corpses on his hands. . . . And when the old servant has to explain why she has only one buttock, and starts to tell her life story from when, as the daughter of a pope, at the age of thirteen, in the space of three months, she experienced destitution and slavery, was raped nearly every day, saw her mother cut into four pieces, suffered war and hunger, and was dying in the plague of Algiers, all to get to the point of telling us about the siege of Azov and the unusual source of nourishment that the starving janissaries found in female buttocks—well, at that point things go on a bit longer: two whole chapters or (say) six pages and a half.[171]

If Prévost had been handed this material, the novel would be 700 pages long—and in fact some critics have suggested *Candide* parodies *Cleveland*—but in Voltaire's hands, it's *Around the World in Eighty Pages*, as Calvino quips (177). (He kept his own novels Voltairishly slim.) In *Candide* and even more so in his other novels, Voltaire (even more than Crébillon) trimmed the fat from the conventional novel, inventing "minimalism" two centuries before that term came into use, though his novels have more wit and intellectual meat to them than than those skinny works usually possess.

In fact, modern fiction is where Voltaire's innovations show the greatest influence. His contemporaries pretty much ignored the overheated vehicle he abandoned after his joyride, except for maybe Sade: in *Letters of Amabed*, Pearson suggests, "Voltaire comes closest to anticipating some of the calmer moments in de Sade's *Justine*" (204), and in *The Man with Forty*

Crowns, the geometrician advances an opinion that will be repeated almost verbatim by several of Sade's philosophical libertines: "Nature concerns itself very little with individuals. There are other insects which live only one day, but of which the species is constantly maintained. Nature is like one of those great princes who reckon as nothing the loss of four hundred thousand men provided they accomplish their august designs" (1:245). Only a few 19th-century French authors followed Voltaire's lead, such as Flaubert in *Bouvard and Pecuchet*. But in the 20th century he became the patron saint of American black humor, obviously so in *Candy* (1958)—Terry Southern and Mason Hoffenberg's amusing homage to Voltaire's greatest novel (though he would have cut its 224 pages in half)—and most successfully so in Kurt Vonnegut's midcareer novels, *Cat's Cradle* through *Breakfast of Champions*. His modern-sounding minimalist style has already been noted—though it's closer to that of Firbank and Spackman than Hemingway and Carver—and his complex metafictions resemble those of Borges, Barth, and Coover. His "merry hissing" can be heard in the learnedly vituperative novels of Gaddis, Vidal, Gass, and Theroux. He is acknowledged as the prince of the Enlightenment, a humanist hero, a secular saint; but he should also be considered one of the fathers of the modern novel, even if he thought so little of the genre that he'd probably demand a paternity test.

And since Voltaire valued brevity, I'll stop there.

The only other French novelist of the time as daring and innovative as Voltaire was his fellow Encyclopedist Denis Diderot (1713–84).[172] Like Voltaire, he originally disdained the novel, defining it as "a tissue of frivolous and imaginary events the perusal of which was dangerous to both taste and morals."[173] But also like Voltaire, he realized the novel was a personal space where he could express more of himself and pursue his ideas with greater freedom than in his public, nonfiction work. In 1748, the same year Voltaire made his fiction debut, Diderot published anonymously an extraordinary novel entitled *The Indiscreet Jewels* (*Les Bijoux indiscrets*). Reportedly undertaken as a dare from his mistress to write something along the lines of Crébillon's *Sofa*, its premise sounds juvenile (and the reason why literary critics ignored the novel until recently): a genie gives the bored king of the Congo a magic ring that conjures a woman's "jewel" (vulva) to

speak up and reveal the lowdown about its hostess, for "a jewel is dispassionate, and adds nothing to the truth."[174] The king's mistress begs him not to let the cat out of the bag: "You will spread discord in every household, undeceive every husband, drive every lover to despair, ruin wives, dishonor maidens, and cause countless other disturbances," but he doesn't care. "Resolve to familiarize yourself with these new tellers of tales" (6). What these *conteuses* tell are mostly bawdy tales of sexual encounters, confirming the timeless male fear/fantasy that women are sexually insatiable. These vagina monologues expose women as dishonest hypocrites who are considerably more sexually experienced than they let on to be. Pointing his ring at one woman after another, sometimes at groups, the shocked king almost gives up on his folkloric quest to uncover a faithful woman; the only one who is as honest as she pretends to be is his mistress, to his relief. (Just two other "jewels" are silent when the magic ring is turned upon them: a lesbian, and a woman who limits herself to anal sex.) Men don't come off much better: the chatterboxes expose them as liars about their sexual conquests, as cuckolds and fools who ruin themselves in pursuit of "jewelry," and count priests and spiritual directors among their most frequent visitors.

What sounds like a smutty joke at women's expense also sounds like a critique of the silence imposed on women in a patriarchal society, a stifling of their impulse to speak truth to power, and of the fear men have of what women *really* think of them. The women liberated by the ring don't speak their mind so much as their body, a revolt against the male tendency to deny or repress female sexuality, but also an exposé of female complicity with that wish. They don't dare boast of their sexual exploits as men do, and don't want to: once they hear other women's jewels yapping, they buy muzzles to silence their own. They censor themselves as a matter of habit, instilled in them from girlhood by a patriarchal society that doesn't want to hear what they think, and that would ostracize them if they spoke frankly. After the first jewel speaks, "all the ladies paled, looked at each other without a word, and preserved their gravity . . . lest the conversation should get out of control" (6), and thereafter they adopt "an air of constraint and spoke only in monosyllables" (7), not daring to disturb the patriarchal order. (The bejeweled reader will have noticed how few female novelists I've

discussed since their heyday in the 17th century.) Some say "that jewels have always spoken, but so softly that what they said was at times barely audible, even to those to whom they belonged" (10). Other women are in denial, unwilling to admit they are sexual beings, ashamed of their bodies, "Always in dread of hearing an impertinent voice issuing from below" (11). But Diderot was also aware that women weren't *allowed* to be honest: shortly after he begins using the ring, the king asks his mistress Mirzoza, "when a woman's mouth and her jewel contradict each other, which should be believed?" and then explains why he trusts the jewel more than its spokeswoman:

> "what interest could these have in disguising the truth? Their motive could only be an illusion of honor. But a jewel has no illusions; it is surely not the seat of prejudice."
>
> "Illusions of honor!" exclaimed Mirzoza. "Prejudices! If Your Highness were exposed to the same inconveniences as we, he would understand that whatever relates to matters of virtue is far from illusory." (8)

Women of the bourgeois and upper classes were trapped in a social system where "honor" (virtue/reputation) was the major quality that determined what kind of life they would have. As tedious as it may be for the modern reader to listen to their endless protests about preserving honor and reputation, women lived in a conservative society where to lose those badges of distinction—as illusory as they may be—was to lose everything. Women didn't make those rules, but they had to follow them, and the note of exasperation in Mirzoza's response is sobering. After a while the king stops referring to his female subjects as "women" and just calls them "jewels"—women had to put up with that too. Diderot also notes how women, denied the more open expression of sexuality that men enjoy, sublimate their erotic energy into cards or pets, not the last time he anticipates Freud.

Diderot was no feminist,[175] and in this novel he mocks the two-facedness of women more often than he condemns their subjugation, but there's just enough of the latter to justify Aram Vartanian's bold claim that

> The voice of his "jewels" functions, provocatively and subversively, as a general metaphor for the voice of "enlightenment" itself. In the novel, the sexuality of women, repressed since time immemorial by the hypocrisies, controls, and orthodoxies of every kind—religious, moral, social, esthetic, and political—joins forces with the new philosophical spirit of the age to break the silence imposed by tradition and custom, and, by so doing, to challenge established authority, awaken dulled curiosity, transgress the boundaries of consecrated prejudice, and gratify sexual desire in the spheres of cultural no less than sexual experience.[176]

In the scientific spirit of the Enlightenment, the king is conducting experiments to verify a thesis, not to humiliate women, and it's important to note that Diderot doesn't condemn female sexual activity as such, only lying about it, or beating around the bush about "love" when sex is meant. After the sexual secrets of two women are revealed, the author leaves us with no doubt which response he prefers: "Zelida was inconsolable. This woman, more deserving of pity than blame, developed an aversion for her Brahmin [priest], left her husband, shut herself up in a convent. As for Sophie, she threw off the mask, braved the talk, put on rouge and beauty marks, went out into society, and had affairs" (21). Thereafter, Sophie and her jewel will be telling the same story, not contradicting herself like all the other woman in the novel. Diderot was keenly interested in the mind–body problem, and *The Indiscreet Jewels* must be the funniest treatment of that dichotomy.

Again like Voltaire (who is fulsomely praised in chapter 40 of the novel), Diderot's irreverence for the novel as a literary form allowed him to mock its conventions (though such mockery was itself becoming a convention by this time). Following Crébillon's examples—*The Skimmer* seems to have been a greater inspiration than *The Sofa*—the novel pretends to be a translation of an ancient African work, with occasional defects in the manuscript. (There's a lacuna just as the author begins to tell of the woman into anal; the narrator invites scholars to "consider whether this break might not be a voluntary omission on the part of the author, dissatisfied with what he had written and finding nothing better to say" [41]; elsewhere the narrator admits he's skipping parts of the original.) He pushes Lesage's

conceit of the novelist as voyeur to invasively intimate extremes, but in the name of candor, not prurience. Diderot pokes fun at other novels of the time, parodies Crébillon's convoluted style in *The Wayward Head and Heart* in one chapter (39), and concludes another with this partly illegible doctor's prescription for insomnia:

> Take some . . .
> some . . .
> some . . .
> some . . .
> of *Marianne* and *Peasant* . . . four pages
> of *Wayward Heart*, one page . . .
> of *The Confessions* [by Duclos], twenty-five and one-half lines (46, modified)

Captain Lemuel Gulliver appears briefly to translate the neighing of a mare's jewel. Some of the chapters have facetious titles, and one polylingual chapter (47), devoted to a well-traveled jewel, contains passages from pornographic novels in English, Latin, Italian, and Spanish, which Diderot's friends supplied him. Chapters are devoted to allegorical dreams, dream analysis, and a traveler's tale about a land of mechanical sex. There is one chapter on drama criticism that so impressed Lessing he copied it into his *Hamburg Dramaturgy*, others on music and literary criticism, and a parody of an academic gathering, where scientists "debated the issue of the talking jewels"—one scientist is tempted to insult another by telling him "that he reasoned like a jewel"—and where anatomists compare the vagina to the trachea and vow, like Frankenstein building a female monster, "to make *delphus* and jewel alike reason, speak, and even sing before you" (9). No female scientists are present.

Later in life Diderot regretted this work—which didn't prevent him from writing three more chapters for it—but *The Indiscreet Jewels* is a dazzling setting of literary pastiche, learned wit, philosophical speculation, and cultural criticism. Its insights into sexual politics are ~~penetrating~~ remarkable, and this ~~jewel~~ ~~peach~~ sweetheart of a novel deserves to be more highly appraised.

Diderot's low opinion of novels changed after he discovered Samuel Richardson's epistolary fictions and learned how effective novels can be when the reader identifies with its characters, and when those characters inhabit a carefully furnished realistic setting (not an allegorical French Congo with gossipy genitals). Diderot applied those lessons well in his second novel, *The Nun* (*La Religieuse*), written in 1760 but not published until 1780. The difference between it and his first novel is like night and day, as the original African author of *The Indiscreet Jewels* would say ("who would hang himself rather than miss a cliché" [47]). Although it too speaks out against female oppression, it is grim and dark where the other is bawdy and light, tightly organized rather than rambling, focused rather than vague about its moral purpose, and an early example of the Gothic novel rather than a late imitation of the pseudo-Oriental tale. *The Nun* raps the knuckles of one of Voltaire's recurring pests, Catholicism's monastic system, and especially the outrage of forcing youngsters with no religious vocation into these prisons. An illegitimate girl named Suzanne Simonin is sent to one by her embarrassed parents and wants out: the novel takes the form of a long letter intended for the Marquis de Croismare, pleading for his intervention. (A real person, the marquis was a friend of Diderot who had taken an interest in a similar nun's plight; as a joke, Diderot sent him letters supposedly written by this nun, which the marquis took seriously enough that Diderot abandoned the joke by killing her off. But he got so wrapped up in his hoax that he decided to convert it into a novel.) Suzanne explains to Croismare that a lawyer has submitted a brief for her case, but it had little effect, for "there was too much intelligence and not enough pathos in it, and hardly any real arguments" (101). Her account pumps up the pathos and makes a stirring argument for abolishing the monastery system, even burning convents down if necessary.

Rebellious Suzanne is shuttled from one convent to another, where she suffers at the hands of various mothers superior: the first practices a kind of spiritual "seduction" (Suzanne's word, 47) to keep her girls in thrall, while the second tortures her almost to death; the third is a lesbian who can't keep her hands off the beautiful but woefully naïve 20-year-old, and who goes mad after Suzanne reports her to her confessor. Suzanne's account of cloistral life is utterly absorbing, and seems too sensational to be true until one looks at the historical record; one critic who did reports that "the

alleged fiction of Diderot falls considerably short of reality" in this regard.[177] Like Voltaire (and decidedly unlike Richardson), Diderot holds our attention with a rapid succession of dramatic scenes, quickly building and maintaining both sympathy for Suzanne and outrage at the convent system, not for its religious teachings—atheist Diderot tolerates Suzanne's unwavering religious beliefs—but for going "against the universal law of nature" (176) by segregating people from society, which even naïve Suzanne understands (and which nature-boy Rousseau didn't, in Diderot's opinion): "Man is born for life in society; separate him, isolate him, and his ideas will go to pieces, his character will go sour, a hundred ridiculous affections will spring up in his heart, extravagant notions will take root in his mind like tares in the wilderness. Put a man in a forest and he will turn into a wild beast, but in a cloister, where a feeling of duress combines with that of servitude, it is worse still. There is a way out of a forest, there is none out of a cloister; a man is free in the forest but he is a slave in the cloister" (136). The "folly of shutting up young and vigorous creatures in a tomb" (177) is both an example of *l'infâme* and a metaphor for all other forms of oppression.

At the end of the novel, after Suzanne has escaped from her convent with the help of her new confessor—who likewise was forced into the cloistered life—she falls on hard times, which is when she reviews the document she's been compiling for the marquis. Rereading it, she realizes she has unconsciously made repeated reference to her beauty and hopes her correspondent doesn't think she's addressing herself "not to his charity but to his lust," though she admits, "I am a woman, and perhaps a bit coquettish, who can tell?" (189). (This postscript registers Diderot's own surprise when he reread the manuscript in 1780 to prepare it for publication.) Like Sylvie in Villedieu's *Memoirs*, Suzanne unconsciously or not titillates the reader with images of her long hair waterfalling out of her headdress, various wardrobe malfunctions, and reports of what Mother Superior said about her "fresh ruby lips" and "that lovely bosom, those legs, that body, that firm, soft, white flesh of yours" (134, 147). Suzanne describes an orgasm Mother Superior enjoys while rubbing against her, puzzled both by her superior's reaction and by her own dazed and confused feelings afterward. Does she anticipate the effect such details will have on

her male correspondent? “Who can tell?” as she coquettishly says, though she might have guessed from the Mother Superior’s reaction to Suzanne’s life story, recounted “more or less as I have been writing it to you:

> I cannot describe the effect it produced upon her, the sighs she heaved, the tears she shed, her expressions of indignation. . . . Now and again she stopped me, stood up, walked about, then resumed her place, or she would raise her hands and eyes to heaven and then bury her head in my lap. When I told her about the scene in the dungeon and that of my exorcism and my public confession she almost shouted aloud, and when I ended my tale and stopped speaking she remained for some time bent over her bed with her head buried in the coverlet and arms stretched out above her head. [After railing against Suzanne’s tormentors,] She pushed aside my collar and coif, opened the top of my dress and my hair fell loose over my bare shoulders; my breast was half uncovered and her kisses spread over my neck, bare shoulders, and half-naked breast. (141–42)

That may or not be the reaction she hopes for from the marquis, but that’s the reaction Diderot had to reading Richardson, and the one he wanted for *The Nun*. He was no doubt aware that his novel trades in tropes exploited by the anticlerical pornographers of the time—the erotically charged convent setting, repressed and/or lesbian sexuality, acts of sadomasochistic “religious” discipline, lascivious monks, ad nauseam—but the result is a powerful, painterly depiction of a way of life rarely glimpsed beyond the parlor grill in other literary novels, an Enlightenment manifesto for freedom, and a devastating attack on an inhuman institution that, unlike legalized slavery, still exists in civilized nations.

Over the next dozen years, as Diderot continued to produce the *Encyclopedia*, write mediocre plays, and review art exhibits, he wrote three idiosyncratic dialogue-novels, never published in book form during his lifetime: the first, *Rameau’s Nephew* (*Le Neveu de Rameau*, 1761, touched up in subsequent years), is a hugely entertaining conversation in a Parisian café between the great composer Jean Philippe Rameau’s nephew—an eccentric, failed musician living by his half-crazed wits by sponging off the demimonde of actresses and critics—and a character he facetiously

addresses as Mr. Philosopher, essentially Diderot himself. (The two knew each other and undoubtedly had conversations that inspired this one.) Their animated conversation lurches all over the place from discussions of morality to music, from the uses of literature to the purpose of life, resulting in a dizzying, exhilarating melange of (in translator Tancock's reckoning) "the literary satire, the social satire, the philosophical argument, the moral question, the cynical nihilism of Rameau, the fictional framework, the real life-story of Rameau, the realistic novel, the comic masterpiece, the picture of manners and last, but doubtless not least in Diderot's own mind, Diderot's personal grudge against the literary clique which had booed his own dramatic efforts" (30).

The nephew is an amazing comic creation, a Rabelaisian motormouth who pantomimes and makes faces as he talks, attracts a crowd as he imitates an opera (singing/playing/acting all the parts), and whose cynical defense of his sycophantic life gradually breaks down as he confesses his feelings of failure to fulfill his own talent and achieve what his famous uncle did. Talent and the nature of genius obsess both speakers—the nephew admitting he lacks them, Diderot hoping he does, despite (and to spite) his malicious critics—as does the question of education, since both have children, putting personal philosophy to a practical test. (It is in this context Diderot makes an observation that Freud later admitted anticipated his theory of the Oedipus complex.[178]) They tackle *the* most important challenge in ethics and morality, namely distinguishing between the "two kinds of laws: some absolutely equitable and universal, others capricious and only owing their authority to blindness or force of circumstances" (39; the latter, which many people confuse with the former, are the ones the *philosophes* sought to overturn.) This extraordinary novel has to be read to be believed, and to appreciate the suppleness and vitality of Diderot's dialogue (impressive enough in his earlier novels); the nephew admits his own style "is the hell of a hybrid squawking, half literary world, half fish-market" (112), and Mr. Philosopher enjoys hearing him talk even as he recoils from his amoral hedonism. It's an astonishing performance, a tragicomic duet in several keys, and even though Diderot didn't publish it—it would have got him in great trouble—he knew he trounced his critics, all

of whom are forgotten now. Appropriately enough, the last words of the novel are, “He laughs best who laughs last” (125).

D’Alembert’s Dream (*Le Rêve de d’Alembert*, written 1769) opens in the middle of a heady discussion between Diderot and his coeditor of the *Encyclopedia* about the materialistic (atheist) view of life and the universe, which Diderot urges upon the mathematician. The next morning, d’Alembert’s housemate, Mademoiselle de L’Espinasse, tells a visiting doctor that d’Alembert has been raving all night, uttering broken fragments of his earlier discussion with Diderot. The doctor interprets and expands upon these remarks as they discuss a wide range of scientific topics and speculations. (It is safe to say that, prior to this novel, no man ever asked a woman “to strip yourself of your present bodily organization and return for a moment to the time when you were simply a soft, fibrous, shapeless, vermicular substance, more comparable to a bulb or root than to an animal” [189].) Later that day, after d’Alembert wakes and leaves, the doctor returns at Mademoiselle’s invitation for a frank talk about sexual matters, specifically chastity—which they both agree is an abomination to nature—masturbation and homosexuality (acceptable), and the possibilities of human–animal breeding (intriguing – their view, not mine). The novel is essentially a talking-heads review of the latest scientific findings and their philosophical implications (the doctor speaks for polymathic Diderot), with prescient remarks about evolution, DNA, and genetics, among other things. But it lacks the appeal of *Rameau’s Nephew*; it’s an important document in the *intellectual* history of the 18th century rather than its literary history. One of his biographers claims, “In its philosophical sweep and imaginative power, *Le Rêve de d’Alembert* is Diderot’s greatest work of all” (Wilson, 559), but it’s not his greatest novel.

The unnatural perversion of abstinence recurs in *Supplement to Bougainville’s* Voyage (*Supplément au* Voyage *de Bougainville*, 1772), which Diderot wrote shortly after reviewing Louis-Antoine Bougainville’s *Voyage around the World*, notorious for its description of the sexual freedom in Tahiti. In Diderot’s novella—which begins in fog, dispersed on the final page by the sun of clear thinking—a character denominated B. tells his friend A. he is reading Bougainville’s *Voyage*, which they discuss. B. then shows A. two sections left out of the book (Diderot’s own inventions): an old Tahitian’s insulting farewell speech to Bougainville, and a discussion

between a younger Tahitian and a French priest comparing the two nations' sex and marriage customs. The novella concludes with A. and B., two of civilization's discontents, agreeing that France's laws on these matters are "insane," but should be honored until they can be abolished. The novella recalls the conflict between the two kinds of laws mentioned in *Rameau's Nephew*, namely, the laws of nature versus those of civilization. Regarding monogamy, for example, the young Tahitian asks: "Does anything, really, seem more senseless than a commandment which makes a sin of the changeableness which is in all of us and dictates a constancy which is not to be found in any of us, which violates the nature and the liberty of man and woman by chaining them to each other forever?"[179] A. and B. have nowhere near the personalities of Mr. Philosopher and Rameau's nephew, and the Tahitian commentators are just Diderot in a grass skirt, but the novella is a sensible study in cultural relativity—"Don the garb of other countries when one goes there," as A. says, "but dress like one's neighbors at home" (112)—and a call not for primitivism but for "Enlightenment utilitarianism, evolving out of the older natural law and basing itself on the emerging sciences of the nature and behavior of man" (Wilson, 590). The novella is included in Feher's *Libertine Reader* because of its fantasies of sexual freedom, but it's more at home in Kramnick's *Portable Enlightenment Reader*, which contains a few excerpts from it.

It was about this time that Diderot wrote an ingenious story called "This Is Not a Story" ("Ceci n'est pas un conte"), in which a captious reader argues with the author. By this time Diderot had fallen under the spell of *Tristram Shandy*, and the nature of the author–reader relationship inspired both this story and Diderot's greatest novel, which could have been called "This Is Not a Novel."[180] *Jacques the Fatalist and His Master* (*Jacques le fataliste et son maître*), written in the 1770s but not published until after his death,[181] might offhandedly be described as a cross between *Candide* and *Tristram Shandy*. Instead of mocking Leibniz-inspired optimism and its catchphrase "the best of all possible worlds," it targets Spinoza-inspired fatalism that insists that everything that happens "was written up there, on high" in "the great scroll"; instead of a linear story told by a confident, sarcastic narrator, we have a tangle of story-lines crossing and interrupting each other, told out of chronological sequence by a peevish narrator being

pestered by a conventional-minded reader; instead of concluding, *Jacques* suddenly stops, followed by an invitation to the reader from the narrator to wrap it up while he does further research into the memoirs he's been using for his book, returning a week later to offer a lame conclusion he found but which he has doubts about.[182] Twice as long as *Candide* but half the length of *Tristram Shandy*, it has the velocity of the former and the endearing eccentricity of the latter.

On one level, *Jacques the Fatalist and His Master* describes the adventures of a loquacious valet and his employer as they travel over a 10-day period to a city where the master has some business to take care of. (James Nicholls suggests the trip is between Paris and Langres, Diderot's birthplace, in August 1765.) To pass the time, the master—a nameless conformist whose activities are mostly limited to taking snuff, consulting his timepiece, and listening to his valet talk—asks Jacques to recount his amorous adventures, which the valet reluctantly begins but never finishes, partly because of his own Sternean digressions, partly because of constant interruptions by events on the road and by others' stories, almost all of which involve staging a duplicitous fiction of some sort. (The longest is by a landlady who is also frequently interrupted as she tells the story of a woman who takes elaborate revenge on a decent man who gradually fell out of love with her, only to have it backfire; the master tells another long one that sets up the novel's unexpected ending.) As the story-lines proliferate, the reader is enmeshed "in a network of lines that enlace,"[183] engineered by a narrator who insists on telling all this in his own fashion, not as the reader might expect it. For "this isn't a novel" (34), he insists, but a documentary history, and he wants to be true to his sources, not to the conventions of fiction. He sniffs, "I don't care for novels, unless they're by Richardson"—who also pretended his were true—for "there's nothing easier than churning out a novel. We'll stick with the truth" (199) he bluffs in this fiction about fiction. What he's really saying is "*let people tell their stories their own way*," as Tristram Shandy pleads (9.25).

As engaging as all the stories in *Jacques the Fatalist* are—and this is a fun book to read, despite (if not because of) its experimental complications—the most interesting story is about the author and reader. They get off on the wrong foot at the very beginning, which opens with the reader asking

questions with childish insistence: “How had they met? [asks the reader] By chance, like everyone else [the author snaps]. What were their names? What’s it to you? Where were they coming from? From the nearest place. Where were they going? Does anyone really know where they’re going?” (3). The reader shuts up long enough to let the author begin the novel in medias res, who halts after a page (when Jacques and his master stop for the night) to let the reader know who’s the boss:

> You see, Reader, I’m into my stride and I have it entirely in my power to make you wait a year, two years, three years, to hear the story of Jacques’s love affairs, by separating him from his Master and making the both of them undergo all the perils I please. What’s to prevent me marrying off the Master and telling you how his wife deceived him? or making Jacques take ship for the Indies? and sending his Master there? or bringing both of them back to France on the same vessel? How easy it is to make up stories! But I’ll let them off lightly with an uncomfortable night, and you with this delay. (4)

But two sentences later, the reader butts in again, and so it goes for the rest of the novel: the author and reader share an occasionally adversarial but codependent relationship like the one between Jacques and his master. And like their relationship, the author is the unpredictable, individualistic one, while the reader—as anonymous as the master and just as predictable—keeps expecting conventional plot developments. This metastory could be called *Denis the Fictionist and His Mass Market*.

Sometimes the reader over his shoulder is useful, as here when the author negligently switches from third-person to first:

> It was late, the gates were all shut, and they’d been forced to stop at an inn outside the town’s walls. There I can hear a great hullabaloo . . .
>
> You can *hear*? But you weren’t there. How could you have heard anything?
>
> You’re right. So Jacques . . . his Master . . . er . . . a terrible hullabaloo is heard. I see two men . . .
>
> *You* don’t *see* anything of the kind. This has nothing to do with you. You weren’t there.

> True enough. There were two men chatting quietly at a table . . . (73)

Elsewhere, the author acknowledges the reader's sharp ear for diction: after making a countrywoman say "Do you realize I've been waiting for you for an hour that has seemed an eternity?", the author admits, "Reader, you're far too pernickety. Agreed, 'an hour that seems an eternity' is for smart ladies in town. 'An hour and more' is what Madame Marguerite would say" (178). Sometimes he becomes defensive, as when Jacques use the word *hydrophobic*, on which the hypercritical reader pounces:

> Just a moment! "Hydrophobic"? Jacques said "hydrophobic"?
>
> No, Reader, he didn't. I confess the word wasn't his. But if you want to apply such high critical standards, I challenge you to read any scene from a comedy or a tragedy, one dialogue, however well-written, and not detect the voice of the author in the mouth of his characters. (224)

Of course, for the reader who doesn't notice these slips at first, Diderot is providing a valuable lesson in reading critically; the novel is a tutorial on how fiction works. Like the *Encyclopedia*, *Jacques* is "an effort at public re-education," as Stephen Werner notes in his insightful monograph (19). But usually he taunts the reader for his/her lack of imagination and conventional tastes, especially those who prefer romances—"But, Reader, why must there always be love stories? . . . All you've ever wanted since the day you were born was to gobble up love stories and you never get tired of them!" (151)—or when the prudish reader chastises him for obscenity, which he first dismisses as pointless ("If you are pure in heart, you will not read my book; if you are depraved, you will not be affected by reading me" [184]), and second defends by citing Voltaire and paraphrasing Montaigne as he insults the priggish reader:

> I rather enjoy—pausing only to change the names—writing down the stupid things you do. Your follies make me laugh, but what I write offends you. To be perfectly frank, Reader, I'd say that of the two of us the more unkind is not me. I'd be only too happy if it were as easy for me to defend myself against your aspersions as it is for you to defend yourself against being bored or imperilled by my book. Just leave me

> alone, you miserable hypocrites. Carry on fucking like rabbits, but you've got to let me say fuck: I grant you the action and you let me have the word. (185)

The point of this is to shock the reader out of complacency and outdated thinking, just as the point of Diderot's *Encyclopedia* and the Enlightenment in general was to blow away old-fashioned beliefs and prejudices with the latest findings in science and progressive thinking. The conventional novel —the author cites Prévost's *Cleveland* as an example—belongs to the *ancien régime*, as do the philosophies of fatalism, providence, predestination, and other modes of magical thinking. Already sniffing the Revolution in the air, Diderot senses a regime change, when class distinctions (as between commoner Jacques and his aristocratic master) will disappear, when the cold comforts of Christian providence will give way to the harsh reality of meaningless chance (as in the novel's opening sentence), even existential alienation: "if there's hardly anything we say that's heard the way it's intended," Jacques laments, "there's far worse: it follows that there's hardly anything we do that is judged by what we had in mind when we did it" (46). It's a world characterized by what Pynchon calls "anti-paranoia, where nothing is connected to anything" (*Gravity's Rainbow*, 434), where things happen at random, not in coherent, predictable sequences (as in conventional novels), and where one should expect the unexpected. That world is formally replicated in *Jacques the Fatalist* by its seemingly chaotic structure, where—as in real life—things happen out of the blue, stories are interrupted, and where things don't turn out as planned. To portray this world accurately, the author needs to be the reader's master, not her servant, needs to disobey orders on occasion, to abandon love stories for more heuristic ones, and to talk frankly. Just as the commoners in this novel are more resourceful and interesting than aristocrats like Jacques's master—whose bland rhetoric contrasts with Jacques's inventive palaver, and whose *ancien régime* sense of honor gets Jacques imprisoned in a dungeon—subversive novels like this one are more resourceful and interesting than conventional ones. And *truer*: not true to the sources the author pretends to be following, but truer to life. The tough-love purpose of Diderot's insulting remarks to his readers is to inspire them to cast off both conventional thinking and conventional novels and to join the revolution,

where a novel like *Jacques the Fatalist* becomes the new standard for fiction, not a zany aberration. Of course it didn't work out that way: the Revolution was a bloody mess, and the conventional novel continues to be preferred over the antinovel, but one can't blame Diderot for that: he could point the way, but it was up to others to follow.

Jacques the Fatalist and His Master is so novel that Diderot could have claimed to have reinvented the novel, but he acknowledges his debt to others near the end when the narrator grandly boasts he's written "the most important work to appear since *Pantagruel*, by François Rabelais, and the life and adventures of Compère Mathieu" (237).[184] Diderot follows in the jaywalking footsteps of Rabelais, Béroalde de Verville, Sorel, and all those who followed Sorel's way (Scarron, Cyrano, Furetière, Subligny, Hamilton, Lesage, Bordelon, Marivaux, Crébillon, Bougeant, Longue, d'Argens, Voltaire) as well as Cervantes and Sterne, both of whom are mentioned—and in Sterne's case, plagiarized (or appropriated)—in Diderot's antinovel. *Jacques the Fatalist* had a few admirers in the 19th century, such as Stendhal, Balzac, Flaubert, and the Goncourt brothers, but it wasn't until the 20th century that Diderotic novels like his began appearing. (*Jacques* didn't appear in English translation until 1959!) I've mentioned Calvino's *If on a winter's night a traveler* and Markson's *This Is Not a Novel* in footnotes, but it is also the godfather of Gide's *Counterfeiters*, Alfau's *Locos*, O'Brien's *At Swim-Two-Birds*, Gaddis's *J R*,[185] Sorrentino's *Mulligan Stew*, Wallace's "Westward the Course of Empire Takes Its Way," and virtually every other metafiction featuring a self-conscious narrator trying to write a novel. Susan Hayward (the critic, not the actress) found parallels between Diderot's novel and Beckett's *Molloy*, and *Jacques the Fatalist* inspired a play by Milan Kundera and a book-length poem by Lyn Hejinian entitled *The Fatalist*. Though the novel was banned in France in 1825 as an "outrage to both public and religious morality and to common decency," Diderot, like Rameau's nephew, has had the last laugh.

After the great strides made in the novel by Diderot and Voltaire, those of the other major novelist of this period, Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712–78), look like a huge step backward. His major—some say only—novel, *Julie, or The New Heloise* (*Julie ou la nouvelle Héloïse*, 1761), is huge and slow-moving where theirs are slim and fleet, retro and sentimental instead of

modern and ironic. It's significant that this epistolary novel begins in the early 1730s, when Prévost's novels and Marivaux's *Life of Marianne* were popular, before the libertine, philosophical novels of later decades rained on their parade of virtues. In soap-operatic fashion, a Swiss baron's 18-year-old daughter falls for her 20-year-old tutor called St. Preux (not his real name) and is seduced by him, but is forbidden by her class-conscious father from marrying the commoner. (Julie tries to force the issue by allowing the tutor to impregnate her, but she suffers a miscarriage before her father learns of it.) An English aristocrat takes St. Preux under his wing and tries to elevate his social standing by taking him to Paris, where St. Preux falls in with the wrong crowd, gets drunk, and sleeps with a prostitute, as he confesses to Julie in a letter. Devastated by her mother's death, which coincidentally follows her discovery of Julie's passionate correspondence, Julie obeys her father's order to marry an old friend of his, a decent but emotionless Russian aristocrat named Wolmar. In a stunning about-face that could be used to illustrate the pathology of denial in the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*, Julie forsakes her passions and becomes the perfect hausfrau, converting her home at the foot of the Alps into a rural utopia. Over the next decade St. Preux tries to forget her by taking a trip around the world; upon his return, Julie and her husband invite him to join their household and become the tutor to their children, a post he accepts though both he and Julie fear a romantic relapse. While St. Preux is away in Italy, Julie rescues her son from drowning but dies soon afterward from the exertion, admitting during a *long* deathbed scene that she still loves St. Preux and looks forward to reuniting with him in Protestant heaven.

Not surprisingly, *Julie* was one of the biggest best-sellers of the 18th century, and was especially popular with women. What is surprising is Rousseau's harsh attitude toward both his novel and his readers, as though he dared them to admire it. One of the few attitudes he shared with Voltaire and Diderot—early friends, later enemies—was their disdain for novels, specifically their corrupting influence: "The refinement of city taste, the maxims of the Court, the paraphernalia of luxury, Epicurean morality: such are the lessons they preach and the precepts they offer," he writes. "The coloration of their false virtues tarnishes the luster of genuine ones; the comedy of civilities replaces real duties; fine words sow disdain for fine

deeds, and the simplicity of good morals is counted as coarseness."[186] The last point was especially egregious, for most novels insulted the lives of provincials who made up the bulk of the reading public at that time. So what does Rousseau offer instead? A novel featuring several aristocrats that he claims is not a novel but a collection of real letters filled with "language mistakes, trite and bombastic style, [and] banal thoughts expressed in turgid terms." "Whom then will it please?" he asks. "Perhaps no one but me" (3). Not since Furetière's *Bourgeois Romance* had an author taken so truculent a tone toward his audience.

Since another critic has already taken a "Close Look at Julie's Underwear,"[187] I'd like to look at *Julie*'s outerwear, specifically its prefaces and footnotes, in which the author/editor weirdly distances himself from his novel. Rousseau wrote a 15-page "Conversation about Novels" that he intended as a preface, but withheld from the first edition in favor of a two-page one. Added to later editions, it takes the form of an imaginary conversation between Rousseau and an adversarial critic named N., who is either his former friend Diderot or someone with a similar aesthetic.[188] Rousseau pretends his book is an actual collection of letters, which N. has trouble believing: "What epistolary style! How stilted it is! What a profession of exclamations! What affectations! What bombast just to convey everyday things! What big words for small ideas! Seldom any sense, any accuracy; never any discrimination, or force, or depth. Diction that is always in the clouds, and thoughts that forever crawl on the ground. If your characters are in nature, admit their style is not very natural" (9). Rousseau admits it, but counters by arguing that a real letter by someone in love, as opposed to one written for a novel, "will be desultory, diffuse, full of verbose, disconnected, repetitious passages. His heart, filled with an overflowing sentiment, ever repeats the same thing, and is never done, like a running spring that flows endlessly and never runs dry. Nothing salient, nothing remarkable; neither the words, nor the turns, nor the sentences are memorable; there is nothing in it to admire or to be struck by" (10). (Rousseau also admitted in his *Confessions* that the first two parts he showed Diderot "was the chattering of a fever; I have never been able to correct it" [386].) None of this sounds very appealing. Suppose it's a novel then, Rousseau suggest coyly. "In that case," N. responds, "I've never seen

such a bad piece of work. These Letters are no Letters; this Novel is no Novel" (7). Rousseau is taking a huge gamble: by normal standards, his book is "detestable," but he's hoping all his offenses against literary decorum are exactly what will create "an authentically new spectacle" (11). It's not a real collection of letters, it's not a traditional novel, it's an antinovel. Since conventional novels corrupt people, only an antinovel will achieve the goal Rousseau set for himself, namely, to "lead its readers to do good," as Julie later writes (2.18).

Another goal Rousseau set for himself was to write a novel without typical novelistic adventures or a villain; he loved Prévost's *Cleveland* and Richardson's *Clarissa*, but he avoids the dramatic escapades of the former and the evil presence of a predator in the latter, as N. notes:

> As for the focus, it is everywhere at once, it is nil. Not a single evil deed; not a single wicked man to make us fear for the good ones. Events so natural, so simple that they are too much so; nothing unexpected; no dramatic surprises. Everything is foreseen well in advance; everything comes to pass as foreseen. Is it worth recording what anyone can see every day in his own home or in his neighbor's?
>
> R. In other words, you must have ordinary men and exceptional events? I think I would prefer the opposite. Besides, you are judging what you have read as one would a Novel. It is not a Novel; you said so yourself. It is a Collection of Letters . . . (8–9, author's ellipses)

So we're back to that. To maintain this illusion, the "editor" keeps up a running commentary on the "collection" in his footnotes: questioning and even mocking his characters, noting their grammatical errors and rustic terms, correcting historical errors, pretending he doesn't understand portions, suppressing some letters (thereby creating some confusion) and rearranging others, giving advice, and both taunting and challenging his readers. Regarding the suppressed letters, for example, he asks the reader to step up and do some work: "nothing essential is missing that cannot easily be supplied with the help of what remains" (1.8).[189] Often he sounds like a malicious book reviewer:

> There, it seems to me, is a twenty-year-old sage [St. Preux] who knows prodigious numbers of things! It is true that Julie congratulates him at thirty for no longer being so learned. (1.22)
>
> I am hard pressed to know how this anonymous lover, of whom it is said later that he is not yet twenty-four, was able to sell a house, not being of age [i.e., 25]. These Letters are so full of similar absurdities that I shall no longer mention them; it is enough to have called attention to them. (1.65)
>
> I believe I hardly need to notify the reader that in this second part and the next [after St. Preux leaves], the two separated Lovers do nothing but rave and wander about; they have lost their poor heads. (2.1)
>
> The fantasy of station! And it is an English peer who says such things! And this is not supposed to be a fiction? Reader, what say you to this? (2.3)
>
> Without anticipating the Reader's judgment and Julie's about these narrations, I think I can say that if I had to make them and did not make them better, I would at least make them different. On several occasions I have been on the verge of removing them and substituting some of my own; ultimately I am leaving them in, and pride myself on my courage. . . . Let us leave these Letters as they are. Let the shopworn commonplaces remain; let the trivial observations remain; all that is of little consequence. (2.14)

I'll stop there, only a third of the way through the novel, to wonder what his provincial readers would have made of such captious remarks, of the author's "courage" to fill his novel with "absurdities" and "shopworn commonplaces," of his avoidance of almost everything they would expect in a novel. Rousseau hoped his readers would have the same reaction that the English lord expresses after St. Preux tells him of the story of his love for Julie: "There are, he said, neither accidents nor adventures in what you have told me, and yet the catastrophes in a Novel would absorb me much less; so much do sentiments complement situations, and honest dealings

outstanding deeds. Your two souls are so extraordinary that they cannot be judged by common rules" (1.60)—of fiction nor of life. Most fell for it and believed these were real letters, as the editor keeps insisting; others, like Diderot and Voltaire, just shook their head in disbelief.[190]

In his "Conversation" Rousseau complains that most novels are populated not with regular folk but with the "smart crowd, fashionable ladies, the high and mighty, the military" (13–14), yet most of his characters belong either to the nobility or are highly educated. "Sublime Authors," he later apostrophizes, "bring your models down a bit, if you want people to try to imitate them" (19), but Julie is so impossibly good, her husband even more impossibly so, St. Preux so impossibly devoted to her (same with Claire, her BFF, the most appealing character in the novel), and their sylvan utopia so impossibly perfect that I doubt very many tried to imitate them. Rousseau's idea of bringing his models down a bit was to give each what he considered a glaring fault—Julie's premarital sex fling, St. Preux's lubricity, Wolmar's atheism, Claire's repressed lesbianism—yet these are characters who could only exist in a novel. St. Preux is an especially odd choice for a romantic role model. He is a rather creepy sensualist in the beginning, the type who thinks it's "sexy" to warn his virginal girlfriend that someday he might lose control and rape her (1.8), which Julie dismisses as "bantering." He makes leering suggestions in many of the early letters, and when writing to her about his visit to the countryside, he says of the Swiss misses "I was a little shocked at the enormous size of their bosoms," which he then compares to Julie's, and cops to mentally undressing his student in the past with his "slithering" eyes (1.23). He's hot-tempered, scolding, suspicious, impetuous, and given to violent fantasies; learning of Julie's decision to marry Wolmar, our hero raves:

> I would rather lose you than share you. . . . Would that heaven gave me a courage equal to the transports that toss me! . . . before your hand could defile itself by that fatal bond abhorred by love and reproved by honor, I would come and plunge with mine a dagger in your breast: I would drain your chaste heart of blood as yet unsullied by infidelity: with that pure blood I would mix that which burns in my veins with a flame nothing can put out; I would fall into your arms; I would breathe my last sigh on your

> lips. . . . I would receive yours. . . . Julie expiring! . . . such sweet eyes extinguished by the horrors of death! . . . that breast, that throne of love, rent by my hand, gushing forth blood and life. . . . (3.16, author's fevered ellipses)

How romantic. I can see why this "beautiful soul" was especially popular with female readers.

Too many of the letters mouth Rousseau's own opinions (or perversions, in the case above), especially in the second half when the letters grow longer and more didactic. He surprises us with the brilliant choice of giving the brief account of Julie's fatal accident to a servant woman, but spoils it with a ridiculously extended death scene with unsubtle parallels to the Passion; had I read this novel earlier I would have added Julie d'Étange to the genealogy of Christ figures in my previous volume (115). Even the subtitle fails: Abélard was 22 years older than his student Héloïse—not merely two years—and secretly married her after seducing her; they were separated and miserable after that, unlike the extended happy family at the foot of the Alps.

Despite breaking all the rules, upsetting reader expectations, and deliberately sabotaging his novel in so many ways, Rousseau was confident that he had written a great book with inspiring characters. As he tells a skeptical N., "Their letters are not immediately engaging; but little by little they win you over: you can neither take them nor leave them. Grace and ease are not to be found in them, nor reason, nor wit, nor eloquence; sentiment there is, it is communicated to the heart by degrees, and it alone ultimately makes up for all the rest" (12). And that's the key to *Julie*'s success: N. uses his head to judge the novel, and finds it artistically unsatisfying, but Rousseau knew most readers use their hearts, and that a large enough dose of sentiment would cover aesthetic faults like delicious frosting on a mediocre cake. The sales figures and sacks of fan mail proved he was right.

Rousseau offered a new direction for the novel, one that would be followed by more writers than followed that of Voltaire or Diderot. It is mapped out in one of St. Preux's letters—another example of Rousseau putting his own opinions into the mouths of his puppets—which is worth

quoting because it was incorporated verbatim into the article on novels in the *Encyclopedia*:

> Novels are perhaps the ultimate kind of instruction remaining to be offered to a people so corrupt that any other is useless; then I would wish that the composition of these sorts of books be permitted only to honest but sensible persons whose hearts would depict themselves in their writings, to authors who would not be above human frailties, who would not from the very start display virtue in Heaven beyond the reach of men, but induce us to love it by depicting it at first less austere, and then from the lap of vice know the art of leading men imperceptibly toward it. (2. 21)

After he is appointed tutor to Julie's kids, St. Preux writes to her husband to say "following our conversations about your children's education I had jotted down a few thoughts derived from them and which met your approval. Since my departure new reflections have occurred to me on the same subject, and I have reduced the whole into a sort of system which I will send to you once I have worked it out better, so that you may examine it in turn. . . . This system begins where Julie's leaves off, or rather it is merely its sequel and development; for everything consists in not spoiling the man of nature by appropriating him for society" (5.8). This could almost be *Emile, or On Education* (*Émile ou de l'éducation*, 1762), which Rousseau originally wrote as a treatise (which survives as the so-called Favre manuscript) and only later converted to a novel by adding a few fictional touches. Most of these are confined to the end, when a girl named Sophie is introduced as Emile's future wife. But it's not really a sequel to *Julie*—it's narrated by Rousseau, not by St. Preux—and its fictional elements are so minor that *Emile* doesn't merit discussion as a novel, except as another instance of the elasticity of the genre. It's a textbook example of what German theorists would call the *Erziehungsroman* (education or pedagogical novel), but there's too much *Erziehung* and not enough *Roman*. (*Emile*'s value resides in its theory of education, which is not a literary concern.) Nor is its attitude very enlightening: "In *Emile*," Cathy Davidson writes, "the great French republican philosopher heaps contempt upon any woman who might believe that the new radicalism and egalitarianism

somehow includes her" (204). Rousseau began writing a sequel in epistolary form entitled *Emile and Sophie*, but what little remains isn't very promising and confirms our suspicion that Rousseau, like Molière's *médecin malgré lui*, was a novelist in spite of himself, not a born novelist. Rousseau's greatest contribution to the development of the novel in fact might be his posthumously published *Confessions* (written 1766–70, published 1781), whose unprecedented frankness and willingness to reveal shameful secrets eventually encouraged some novelists to open their raincoats to the reader's shocked view.

Courage, mes enfants! Only a handful of French novelists to go.

Both Diderot and Rousseau make slighting references to a popular woman novelist of the day, Marie Jeanne Riccoboni (1713–92). A successful actress, she began writing fiction in her forties for the same reason Diderot did: as a dare. Scoffing at a critic's praise of *The Life of Marianne*'s "inimitable" style, she wrote a continuation that was published to acclaim and impressed Marivaux himself. Encouraged by this response, she began writing novels that quickly became best-sellers; in fact, her third novel—the one Rousseau slights for "ridicul[ing] one's hosts, in repayment for their hospitality" (*Julia* 5.2n)—was second only to *Julia* "in the number of editions and printings during a three-year-period."[191] That novel, *Letters from Juliet Lady Catesby to Her Friend Henrietta Campley* (*Lettres de Mylady Juliette Catesby à Mylady Henriette Campley, son amie*, 1759), is an engaging hybrid of epistolary and memoir novel. Written with verve and wit, this "little masterpiece of elegance and sentiment" (as a later French novelist will call it[192]) opens with Juliet informing her friend that she's fleeing London to stay with friends along the way down to Winchester to escape Lord Ossery, a former suitor who dumped her two years earlier without explanation to marry another. In subsequent letters she expresses her mixed feelings about Ossery, her impatience with other guys hitting on her, and her resistance to the reconciliation urged by one of Ossery's friends. For the latter she encloses in a letter an autobiographical "History of Lady Catesby and Lord Ossery," which is answered near the end by the 30-page "History of Lord Ossery," in which he reveals the secret reason for

jilting her: drunk one night with his buddies, he raped a friend's sister and felt honor-bound to marry her once she proved pregnant. She recently died, hence his attempt to patch things up with his first love, and patch they do: Juliet forgives and marries him in short order (though annoyed he didn't share his problem earlier), and looks forward to a visit from Henrietta, the recipient of all these letters.

Julietta is a smart, appealing character, and her letters are snappy and believable, unlike Rousseau's lengthy, overwrought epistles. (They're so realistic one is dated "Wednesday—no—Thursday, six in the morning," a natural mistake after being up all night.) In a few instances Juliet encloses copies of others' letters for Henrietta, which Diderot derides in *Jacques the Fatalist*.[193] These add variety and allow other points of view, though the novel is short enough, and Juliet compelling enough, that such variety isn't strictly needed. On the other hand, the alternation between letters and confessional narratives is an ingenious solution to providing background, and creates a contrast between the guarded, elevated tone of estranged lovers versus the girl-talk Juliet uses with her pen pal. (And BTW those catty remarks about her hosts are totally justified.) Like Juliet herself, *Letters from Juliet Lady Catesby* exhibits "strength of mind, and dignity of sentiments" (letter 22), but in a manner closer to Jane Austen than Madame de Lafayette.

The 18th-century translations of Riccoboni's other half-dozen novels are reportedly of poor quality, failing to catch her style; the only one deemed worthy of translation in recent years is her shortest novel, *The Story of Ernestine* (*Histoire d'Ernestine*, 1765). A sedate work with quiet charm, it has a fairytale quality: a German-born girl is orphaned in Paris, apprenticed to a painter of miniatures, and at 16 attracts the attention of one of her sitters, the young Marquis de Clémengis. Prevented for legal and social reasons from marrying beneath his station, he secretly sets her up as a financially independent young lady out of pure friendship, but when unworldly Ernestine learns that people assume she's his mistress, she reacts as though she had lost her virginity: "I feel that I have lost something precious; I have just been robbed, deprived of . . . what? Not even wishes!" (52). Her eyes now open to society's "prejudices, its malicious observations" (41), she retreats to a convent, but defies society when she

learns the marquis has suffered a setback. An unexpected twist clears the way for their marriage on the penultimate page, but not before Riccoboni scores several hits against social prejudices and the double standard held against women. Ernestine's loss of innocence is paralleled by her progress as an artist: she realizes her original miniature of the marquis captures his features but not his soul, and begins revising her work; his soul turns out to be pure, but Ernestine learns the glittering surface of Parisian society conceals a rotten soul.

That glittering surface undoes a weaker woman in playwright and journalist Jean-François de Bastide's (1724–98) curious novella *The Little House* (*La Petite maison*, 1758, rev. 1763), in which a libertine named Trémicour seduces art student Mélite with home decor. *Petites maisons*—love nests on the outskirts of Paris intended for erotic assignations—figure in most libertine novels of the day, but rather than merely providing the setting for a libertine seduction, Trémicour allows the gorgeously decorated house to do the work for him. As Mélite oohs and aahs over the furnishings, informed enough to recognize the work of the artists and architects that the narrator identifies for the rest of us in footnotes, she moves through the rooms as through various stages of foreplay. Trémicour insists the decor is the outward manifestation of his passion for her—"Although you have reproached me for not feeling love," he complains, "you will at least concede that so many things here capable of inspiring it should honor my imagination" (84)—which the art-smart but heart-dumb woman comes to believe; losing her bet that she can resist him, she gives in on the final page.[194] *The Little House* recalls Colonna's *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili* in its eroticized descriptions of architecture and decor and in its exploration of erotic transference, in this case from the house to the house's owner (and his army of decorators). It is also an allegory of the seductive power of art, of the aesthetic bliss an experienced artist can induce, a happy ending for the reader if not for Mélite, who is probably correct in her assumption that she'll become just another notch on Trémicour's exquisite bedpost.

As conditions deteriorated in France in the decades leading up to the Revolution, many novelists understandably escaped to fantasy and utopianism. In one of the biggest best-sellers of the day, *The Year 2440* (*L'An 2440*, 1771), Louis-Sébastien Mercier (1740–1814) recounts the long

dream of a man like himself who wakes up in the Paris of the future. The novel may as well have been titled *The Year 1840* because he doesn't envision any technological advances or futuristic marvels; he merely dreams of "the France of his day purged of its abuses," as Darnton says (124). There's not much of a story: a man of the 25th century simply leads the 700-year-old dreamer around Paris to point out changes, while the 18th-century author supplies voluminous footnotes explaining why these changes were necessary, not trusting his readers to make the obvious connections. There's no character development or meaningful form; at one point the author remembers something he meant to say about theaters a hundred pages earlier, so he just bungs it in during a chapter on painting, shrugging "the disposition of a work is of no great moment, provided the author there includes all his ideas."[195] Given this attitude, his France of the future predictably tolerates only utilitarian art that supports official values (i.e., propaganda). Any art promoting sensuality is banned, and women were banished long ago from public life to stay home to raise children and obey their husbands. Like many utopias, it is tarred by totalitarianism.

In a chilling chapter, the dreamer wanders into the royal library and sees empty shelves; the few books retained from his own time are stuck in a closet, for everything else was destroyed, the librarian explains, in order "to rebuild the structure of human knowledge":

> By an unanimous consent, we brought together on a vast plain all those books which we judged either frivolous, useless, or dangerous; of these we formed a pyramid that resembled, in height and bulk, an enormous tower; it was certainly another Babel. Journals crowned this strange edifice, and it was covered on all sides with ordinances of bishops, remonstrances of parliaments, petitions, and funeral orations; it was composed of five or six hundred thousand commentators, of eight hundred thousand volumes of law, of fifty thousand dictionaries, of a hundred thousand poems, of sixteen hundred thousand voyages and travels, and of a milliard of romances. (2:5)

That's 1,000,000,000 novels. All my pretty ones? The only novels that were saved were Fénelon's *Telemachus*, those of Richardson and Rousseau, a few

of Voltaire's ("where he is not ridiculous, too severe, or improperly satirical" [2:27]—*The Ingenu* is later singled out for praise), and a didactic historical novel called *Belarius* (1767) by Jean-François Marmontel.[196] Elsewhere the author has a kind word to say about Goldsmith's *Vicar of Wakefield* (1:115), but that's it for fiction, nor do poets and dramatists get off much better.

An artless work, *2440* deserves some respect for its heartfelt concern for social reform. The exasperated author is driven to despair by the abuses he sees around him, and in his footnotes he roars with all the wrath of an Old Testament prophet. He's as vicious as Voltaire, who is praised often in the novel, though criticized for his lack of depth.[197] Mercier wasn't much of a novelist, but he was a great journalist, and the Paris of the 1770s comes alive in his book; as Darnton says, "There is no better writer to consult if one wants to get some idea of how Paris looked, sounded, smelled, and felt on the eve of the Revolution" (118).

A novel Mercier would have flung like a serpent onto his bonfire of books appeared the year following his. In *The Devil in Love* (*Le Diable amoureux*, 1772, rev. 1776), Jacques Cazotte (1719–92) mixes the sylph-lore of *Le Comte de Gabalis* and *The Fairy Doll* with the Catholic superstition of demonic possession for one of the earliest examples of the fantastic: fiction in which the protagonist (and the reader) is uncertain whether he's dreaming, hallucinating, or witnessing something that defies the laws of nature.[198] This uncertainty is masterfully sustained in this story about a young Spaniard named Alvaro de Maravillas (Spanish for "wonders"), inordinately devoted to his mother, who while stationed in Naples learns from his senior officer how to summon spirits. His first attempt conjures up a floating camel head, which agrees to serve him. Taking the form first of a white spaniel and then of an androgynous servant, Biondetta—as Alvaro calls him/her—explains that she is a sylphid who wants to escape the spirit world by marrying a human. Her gender is uncertain (as if waiting to see which way the soldier swings), and the text alternates between male and female pronouns as Alvaro hesitates how to respond to her offer of secret knowledge. Biondetta follows him to Venice at Carnival, where the masks and revels further blur the distinctions between reality and fantasy. Spying on her as she builds and then plays a harpsichord—the first edition included

the score to the song she sings—Alvaro finally falls in love and sets off to take her home to meet mother, but just before they arrive Biondetta admits he's the devil, reverts to the dread dromedary head, and disappears. Alvaro's mother brings in a scholar from Salamanca who listens to his story and assures him it wasn't a dream, and that the devil is casting similar spells elsewhere. This opens Alvaro's "eyes to many things that are happening: I already see . . . a multitude of possessed souls haplessly unaware of their possession" (83)—which seems to be Cazotte's diagnosis of his trouble era. (He was right to be suspicious, for during the madness of the early days of the Revolution, he was guillotined for his loyalty to the king.) It's left to the reader to decide whether the scholar is right or whether the whole thing was a hallucination or dream dramatizing Alvaro's gender confusion and problematic relationship to his mother, about whom he has been obsessing throughout the mesmerizing novella. It raises many questions but answers none; as Philip Stewart confesses after wrestling with it for 18 pages, "this must be one of the most underdetermined texts in narrative literature" (*Rereadings*, 210).

The Devil in Love builds on the older traditions of fairy tales and the occult to create something closer to the psychological horror fiction of Gothic novelists and, in the 19th century, the tales of Hoffmann and Poe. (In fact, Hoffmann's "Der Elementargeist," essentially an adaptation of *The Devil in Love*, includes two characters who discuss it.) Despite its deal with the devil, it's more Kafkaesque than Faustian. Cazotte wrote some other novellas that spoofed popular genres of his time—*A Thousand and One Follies* (1742) alludes to Crébillon's *Sofa* and *His Unlooked-for Lordship* (1767) exploits the fad for English novels—but with *The Devil in Love* he introduced a startling new mode that to this day continues to be exploited in fiction and film.

Robert-Martin Lesuire (1737–1815) first raised eyebrows with a Voltairish novel called *The Savages of Europe* (*Les Sauvages de l'Europe*, 1760), in which a pair of French lovers and a Chinese scholar visit England and suffer every species of abuse at the hands of its violent yobs. The Mandarin had warned the French couple that the only "difference between the English and their brother-savages of Africa is that, among the latter, the fair sex meet with some consideration" (21). The Frenchman was inspired by the novels of Fielding and Richardson to visit England, but discovers to

his sorrow that fiction can be misleading. (He is, however, fought over in one of literature's first catfights: "The caps soon disappeared, the shifts soon followed their example . . ." [92].) But Lesuire is remembered today, if at all, for an outlandish novel entitled *The French Adventurer* (*L'Aventurier françois*, 1782). This 500-page novel borrows freely from a number of genres: it begins as a picaresque when the aristocratic Gregoire Merveil (cf. French *merveille*: marvel, wonder) is kidnapped and becomes a beggar, scraping by until age 10 when he meets both the love of his life—six-year-old Julie de Noirville—and his nemesis, her evil father, who we learn at the end is the one who kidnapped him. Conflicts ensue, sending Gregoire off on other picaresque adventures, until he is tricked into becoming a monk and then imprisoned in a dungeon, as is Julie, at which point the novel morphs into Gothic horror. After escaping, the lovers are separated and Gregoire is banished from France; heading for South America, he is shipwrecked on a desert island, where he imitates Robinson Crusoe (named at 2:102) for four years, recapitulating the growth of civilization. He sets out in a homemade boat and arrives down in the land of the Alsondons, a race of gnomes who live underground. Most of the rest of the novel operates in this fantasy world: after two years among the gnomes he is rescued by a French explorer but robbed, then stumbles upon an alternative France in Brazil (apparently), whose inhabitants have built a replica of Paris.[199] Ruled by a 16-year-old queen named Ninon—descended from the famous 17th-century hostess Ninon de Lenclos—this New Paris is only marginally better than the original, and allows Lesuire many opportunities to criticize his own society from a distance. Gregoire eventually impregnates the queen, becomes king, and has further adventures while exploring his kingdom: he is imprisoned by a tribe of Viragoes, who treat men like beasts of burden until Gregoire leads a revolt and returns relations to their "natural" order; comes across a band of ageless people who practice cryogenics, freezing themselves to prolong their lives; and finally visits a democratic utopia where "All the children were brought up in common," where there's a cap on income so that "there were no rich, nor consequently no poor," no nobility, and where there is universal suffrage (3:201–5). Returning from this isle of sanity to the irrational world, Gregoire puts down a revolt in New Paris, is poisoned and cast adrift in the sea, rescued by an English

ship, and makes his way back to old Paris, resumes his search for his beloved Julie, and then marries her after the secret of his aristocratic origin is revealed.

The world according to Lesuire is a topsy-turvy one where the "real" world of France is as absurd as the unreal lands he visits. It's a duplicitous one: he fills his novel with doppelgangers and illusions, false paradises and imitation cities. Gender and class are fluid, roles reversed: for various reasons young Gregoire often dresses as (or is mistaken for) a woman, or his twin (there's a prince-and-the-pauper subplot); he's a beggar one day, a king the next, mistaken for a madman, changing clothes and occupations as fate decrees, trying his best to navigate an uncertain world with only Julie as his polestar. (During his adventures he has sex with a number of women, but remains faithful to her in his fashion.) *The French Adventurer* is both a vivid picture of the chaotic uncertainty of the 1780s and a vacation slide-show of fantasy alternatives. The subterranean world of Alsondons, for example, has its charms; resourceful Gregoire introduces a number of technical innovations, including clockwork: "Visitors however may prefer the old method of measuring time," the editors of *The Dictionary of Imaginary Places* note, "in which a young bare-breasted girl stands on a pedestal in the main square and a youth places his hands on her breasts, counting her heartbeats out loud, each beat being the equivalent of a second" (16; see 2:162–63). The gnome-priests have worked out a scam in which they drug young women with opium and take them aboveground to witness "paradise," where they engage in the exploitative "intercourse of souls" before the gnomides are drugged and returned to the "real" world underground. (Priests, monks, and spiritual advisors are bitterly satirized throughout the novel.) Gregoire gets in on this scam, but also celebrates the beauty of nature while revealing it to his benighted girlfriends: indeed, the novel contains some of the best nature writing since *Julie*. As the author acknowledges in his preface, *The French Adventurer* is pop fiction rather than great literature, more Verne than Voltaire, but it does accurately diagnose France's many ills and offers potential cures, none of which, of course, were taken. Like Mercier, Lesuire was powerless to save France from self-destruction and could only fantasize about an alternative reality—and continued to do so for three more sequels.

The most elaborate fantasy novel published in French at this time was written by the famous Giacomo Casanova (1725–98). Nearing 60 after an adventurous life (to put it mildly), he decided he wanted to immortalize himself in a novel. As he explains in a letter to Count Max Lamberg dated 15 April 1785,

> Three years ago in Venice, displeased with everything, I suddenly had the fantasy of setting myself up as a creature of a new world, of a new human race, a new code of civil laws, a good religion, another way of providing food and lodging, of living together and engendering fellow creatures, and I saw myself obtaining the approval of the whole world, everyone feeling obliged to say, after reading my work, Oh! happy world. . . . At the end of this work, which will be divided into two volumes in 8°, each 500 pages long, I will say as Ovid did about his *Metamorphoses*: Here is a work that will vault me to immortality. I have written two-thirds, but I am making brisk progress and I will hand it in in a year. (Flem, 212)

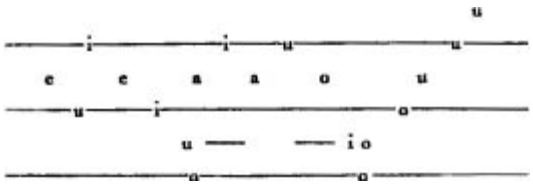
In 1788 Casanova privately printed his huge novel *Icosameron* (20 Days—the time it takes for the narrator to relate his tale) in an edition limited to 350 copies, selling fewer than half to subscribers, few of whom, apparently, ever bothered to read it.[200] He had begun it in Italian, but decided to rewrite it in French, for he felt it would be better appreciated in that language. (He was very familiar with French literature, and in fact had cowritten a play with Prévost [*Les Thessaliennes*, 1752], translated one of Voltaire's, and adapted novels by Tencin and Riccoboni into Italian.) Drawing upon Plato, Erasmus, Bacon's *New Atlantis*, and Holberg's *Niels Klim,* among other sources, Casanova concocted the tale of two English teenagers on an Arctic expedition in 1533 who accidentally descend through the Maelström in a kind of bathysphere to a vast island beneath the Earth's surface called Protocosmo, where a sun shines permanently in a rose-colored sky, populated by androgynous, color-coded humanoids called Megamicres (Big Littles, probably taken from Voltaire's *Micromegas*) who are 18 inches high and speak in musical tones. Suspecting they have stumbled upon the original Garden of Eden, Edward and his sister Elizabeth

spend the next 81 years there (about a dozen Earth years) interacting with the Megamicres, making changes to their society, and leaving behind 4 million descendants. (They mate shortly after arrival and continue doing so once a year, always producing twins who marry each other, etc.; Edward/Casanova includes an elaborate defense of incest based on his reading of Genesis.) The English giants gradually Westernize and thus spoil paradise, largely because of Edward's technological "advances," including gunpowder and weaponry. A mistimed explosion in fact blows Edward and Elizabeth back up into a cavern that leads to the surface in Slovenia. The two make their way back to England in 1615, then tell their story to their astonished, aged parents and some neighbors.

An extended thought-experiment, Casanova fantasizes how a utopian society might work—Protocosmo is a highly regulated, mathematically determined, class-conscious society of naked androgynes devoted to the arts—and then imagines the changes he would make, indifferent or unaware that most of the changes are for the worse. (Edward displays the smug confidence of a colonizer or missionary.) Despite some farsighted inventions—the automobile, airplane, fountain pen, hot plate, television, telegraph poles, chemical warfare, and acoustic engineering—Casanova is surprisingly conservative, imagining a world very much like his own, only one where he could display the full range of his talents and be better appreciated by his patrons. (Aside from the incest, it's sexually conservative as well, critical of the libertinism for which his name is synonymous.) Brooding often on the Garden of Eden myth, Edward introduces Christianity to the sun-worshiping Megamicres and makes himself pope, but he doesn't allow his disciples to examine this new religion and in fact encourages religious ignorance, especially in his most devout son: "How could I undeceive him? The whole edifice of belief might crumble" (160). As Edward's sons move out and take control of other lands, political conflict and diplomatic treachery lead to war, yet Edward remains curiously unmoved by his destruction of Eden. This was the realpolitik world Casanova knew, and it's odd that after imagining a utopian alternative he would slowly make it resemble his own.

Like Casanova, Edward spends enormous amounts of time and resources trying to impress others: "I realized that to make a fortune for myself and my posterity, I had to win the Megamicres' respect by means of some

dazzling achievement. A beautiful fireworks display would surpass all my previous productions" (135–36). *Icosameron* is a fireworks display of Casanova's encyclopedic knowledge of music, science, theology, optics, mathematics, architecture, politics, history, philosophy, chemistry, genetics, medicine, economics, and literature. The novel has some innovative touches, like Casonova's transcription of a sentence in Megamicran that Elizabeth sings-speaks:



It also raises some interesting philosophical questions; the Megamicres know in advance the day they will die, and Edward ponders: "Would we here be better off if we also knew? If we knew, perhaps we would not waste our allotted time in inconsequential activities. As it is, we prefer not to know. We reject the thought of death and delude ourselves into thinking that we will never die" (159), which is a heretical but honest thing for a Christian to admit. But *Icosameron* is a little too much like a fireworks display: interesting while it lasts but leaving behind little of value. Even for a fantasy novel it is marred by implausibilities and inconsistencies: Casanova often forgets his Englishmen are three times bigger than the Megamicres; Edward's 17th-century listeners are comfortable with the idea of incest; and the idea of an English lad becoming a Leonardesque inventor within a few years is hard to swallow, as even Casanova came to realize: on the 12th day of the narrative, an auditor notes Edward "had a good education and he was clever" but "he had no experience in the arts and not much more of science than would be expected of a fourteen year old. Yet over there, with no books to help, he became an artisan, an architect, an engraver, an alchemist, a mathematician, a theologian, an excellent oculist, a poet and a great politician," while another auditor "keeps wondering about the learned words and phrases Edward uses in discussing some of the Megamicran affairs. *They* surely did not know Greek so he must have supplied them himself in his narration" (131–32). Edward says he learned a little Greek in school—which is where he presumably picked up the word

icosameron—and "read a great deal in physics and the arts," but he dodges further questions and quickly gets back to his story. In essence, Casanova gives a tour of his own mind, not of Protocosmo, which is one reason *Icosameron* doesn't really work as a novel: it's the wrong vehicle for that destination. (I remind myself that I read a severely abridged edition, but I doubt the material that wound up on the translator's cutting-room floor would redeem it.[201]) Casanova was crushed when he realized the novel would not make him rich or famous, and only then took up a suggestion made years earlier to write his memoirs. He died before knowing *that* fascinating book was the one that would assure his immorality; I read it 30 years ago and consider it one of the great reading experiences of my life.

Another writer more famous for his memoirs than his novels is the inkstained "Rousseau of the gutter," "the chambermaids' Voltaire" (as early critics derided him): Nicolas-Edme Restif (originally Rétif), usually called Restif de la Bretonne (1734–1806). Trained as a printer, inspired by Marie Riccoboni's novels (some of which he typeset), he wrote 50 books occupying some 200 volumes, half of them novels, including *Les Contemporaines* (My Contemporaries, 1780–85), a 42-volume collection of 272 novellas and 444 stories, and a 2,000-page autobiography, *Monsieur Nicolas* (1794–97), which is ranked by some up there with Rousseau's *Confessions* and Casanova's memoirs. During the last 20 years of his life, Restif literally lived for writing; a typical day consisted of "writing in bed from daybreak until three o'clock in the afternoon, dining in bed, and spending the rest of the day correcting proofs or working on his own books at the printer's. Often, as in the later stages of the publication of *Monsieur Nicolas*, he actually composed his works at the printer's, to save time and money, so that some of his books never went through the manuscript stage, but were set up in type straight away by the author."[202] Only a few of Restif's novels have been translated into English, which is perhaps just as well—even a sympathetic critic says he wrote "too many dozens of unreadable volumes"[203]—but fortunately those few include his best novel as well as two interesting others from the beginning and end of his career.

Lucilla, or The Progress of Virtue (*Lucile, ou les progrès de la vertu*, 1768), Restif's second novel, is noteworthy because 15-year-old Lucilla owes her progress to virtue not to religious or moral teachings but to novels.

Forced to marry a debauched "monkey of a man," Lucilla allows her father's clerk to take her to Paris to hide, where they become separated and Lucilla is scooped up by a bawd who preps her by giving her racy Italian plays to read, then sells the ingenue to a young aristocrat named Durichemont. Struck by her innate qualities, he and his father decide to educate her in virtue by giving her uplifting novels to study—"Books have misled her," said the sage mortal [Durichemont's father], "and books will set her right" (chap. 15)—beginning with Riccoboni's *Story of Ernestine*, which she loves so much that she is given the rest of Riccoboni's works and three other moral novels: Rousseau's *Julie*, d'Arnaud's sentimental *Julie* (1767), and *The Virtuous Family*, which happens to be Restif's first novel, published the year before! (It was a failure, so he probably hoped to shift some unsold units by saying Lucilla liked this one best, even though the narrator admits it's "inferior to the two others.") Lucilla takes the correct approach to books, the narrator argues, unlike "so many others [who] seek only the aliment of an inordinate passion, a preservative against their weariness of existence, or at most an innocent amusement; . . . Others suck only poison from them, because their corrupted souls are blind to what is good, and catch solely at evil; Lucilla collects only their honey" (chap. 16). Restif said the novel was inspired by Voltaire's *Ingenu*, a debt he pays when Lucilla adds Voltaire to her reading list. But Restif's motive was didactic, not metafictional: as Porter explains, Lucilla's education via fiction reveals "a singular naïveté that Restif shares with at least his generation, a naïveté that in his case is doubled by the high idea he has of the author's role in society. Restif really believes that virtuous novels change people's lives for the better" (45–46), and sometimes they do.

Eventually Durichemont discovers that Lucilla is not the daughter of a bawd, which clears the way for their marriage and happy ending, but not before Restif indulges in the licentiousness that laces much of his work. The debauched man Lucilla was intended for takes out his displeasure in a whore's arms, who infects him with syphilis; and returning to the bawd's house, Lucilla and her financé listen to an old lecher drool over the blonde teen:

> do you conceive what pleasure it would be to have in one's power, were it but for an hour, an honest girl, beloved by another, who believes her

> chaste, to – – –

deteriorates into a sleazebag, a sexual predator who loves to trick women into thinking they're having sex with someone else, and a bullying pimp who rents out his own sister. Unashamed of what he's become, he wallows in his degradation: "I find, in the lowest degrees of vice, a certain restfulness, a certain repose," he writes his disappointed mentor (171), admitting that, like his sister, "I don't always follow the advice you give me" (181). (Restif is careful to show that it's not Gaudet's libertine philosophy that corrupts them, but their inability to live by his sophisticated doctrine.) Gaudet gives up on pox-ridden Ursule—"In all honesty we must admit that an ugly woman is good for nothing," he writes coldly (180)—but he enlists Edmund in one final scheme to become rich and powerful by marrying elderly rich ladies. After Gaudet's bride dies mysteriously and he resists arrest, he defiantly commits suicide while Edmund is sentenced to the galleys. Years later, a broken man, Edmund returns to his childhood village, mistakenly kills his reformed sister, then is crushed beneath the wheels of his own carriage (a symbol for his self-destructive tendencies) after the horses are spooked by a stone thrown by a former mistress.

The Corrupted Ones is the ugliest French novel of its time, relentless in its depiction of the miseries caused by an undisciplined sex-drive— the perverted peasants' mentor is all in favor of sex, but in moderation— and daringly realistic in its representation of life among the lower classes. A psychologist of perversion, Restif notes the exultation some people take in degradation—Edmund revels in his like a pig in mud, and Ursule speaks of "the joy which comes after having been beaten" (178)—which led critic F. C. Green to claim "Rétif is moving in a region never before frequented by the novelist. More than a hundred years before Gide or Proust, he stretches the confines of the novel to admit the analysis of abnormal psychology" (443). Restif describes the protagonists' sordid surroundings with Hogarth's eye for symbolic detail: at one low point, Edmund holes up "in a garret lit by a skylight, but very gaily wallpapered, since it was decorated with theatre posters applied directly to the lathes (174), a metaphor for this grim, gaudy novel.

The novel's homespun message (Farmers, don't allow yer young 'uns to go to the big city) is complicated by the fascinating Gaudet d'Arras; only a peasant would regard him as the villain of the piece. An older, noble-looking man with homosexual leanings, Gaudet is an avowed atheist who

tries to cure the Rameau teens of their provincial "prejudices" regarding sentimental love—"In love I value only the physical, and that in convenient moderation" (52)—and argues "that pleasure is the highway to well-being," qualifying that as "true pleasure, because there are also counterfeits" (51), which are the ones our perverted peasants embrace once they hit Paris, heedless of the distinction. "When you wish to judge the virtue or moral turpitude of any action," he adviced them back in Auxerre, "you must put the following question to yourself: 'What harm can come of it? Could it possibly prejudice my existence?—or would it only affect the approbation of those who know me?' After this it is necessary to examine the advantages and the pleasure which the action can afford you. If the good exceeds the bad, then carry on, riding roughshod over prejudice!" (51–52). It's the failure to apply this moral calculus that leads to the Rameaus' ruin, not the principles behind it. But Gaudet has a larger goal than personal pleasure in mind: his final scheme, he tells Edmund, is intended not for self-aggrandizement but to reform France, "even at the risk of ruining ourselves" (41). Like many Enlightenment *philosophes*, he wants to abolish the monastic system, redistributing its wasted wealth to those who have served their country in some capacity, and redistributing the excessive wealth of the idle rich to the deserving peasantry. He plans to tax luxury, provide inexpensive public entertainments, decriminalize prostitution, and to lead a "moral revolution" so that "philosophy reigns supreme" and can "restore to earth the reign of reason and happiness" (201–2). Gaudet d'Arras is an amazing creation: a libertine social reformer, a gay hedonist who wants to save the world. Unfortunately, Edmund and Ursule adopt only the libertine part, unworthy of this visionary Übermensch in a monk's cowl. "Until we come to Balzac," the aforementioned Green writes with some exaggeration, "there is no character in European fiction who may be compared in stature or in originality with Gaudet d'Arras" (441). Green has Vautrin in mind, the homosexual criminal mastermind who preys on the young protagonists of Balzac's best novels, but Restif's huge novel, along with his vast *Les Contemporaines*, provided the blueprint for the later novelist's Human Comedy cycle, not to mention Zola's Rougon-Macquart cycle, whose dirty realism and social conscience pungently recall Restif's.

Unfortunately, the only other novel of his available in English, and one that contributed to Restif's rather grubby reputation in some literary

quarters, is a wretched piece of pornography entitled *The Anti-Justine* (1798). The narrator is ashamed to admit that after reading Sade's notorious *Justine* (1791) he was aroused to imitate its brutal characters: "I got myself astride a whore, rode her roughshod, plied the crop and dug an implacable spur—bit her breast, kneaded her flesh, took a stick to her. . . ."[205] Deciding to write an erotic novel more respectful toward women, "sweeter to the taste than any of Sade's and which wives who would be better served will bring to the notice of their undiligent husbands" (9), Retif launches into a raunchy tale of incest (brother–sister, father–daughter) and shoe fetishism, which is so pronounced here and in his other novels – an early one is called *Franchette's Foot* (1768) – that *retifism* became the term for that kink. There's no plot to speak of, just the lubricious adventures of "Cupidonnet" spurted out in gobs of coarse language, a parody of Sade at his worst, and almost as violent in spots. Restif's contempt for Sade was mutual: writing from prison in 1783 to his wife, who often supplied him with books, Sade told her, "Above all, do not buy anything by Monsieur Rétif, in the name of God! He is a Pont-Neuf author, fit only for the *bibliotheque bleu.*"[206] After *The Anti-Justine* appeared, Sade publicly attacked Restif in his "Essay on Novels," denigrating "A style which is crude and pedestrian, nauseating adventures invariably set in the lowest company, and no merit other than a prolixity for which only spice-sellers will be grateful." These criticisms certainly apply to *The Anti-Justine*, which was merely an excuse for Restif "to exercise some of his most hidden and damnable urges," and to pile up "obscenity and irreverence with absolutely no intent other than delight in being bad" (Porter, 386, 389). Even if you share his passion "for prettily turned feet in cunning little shoes" (11), you would be well adviced to look elsewhere to get your freak on.

While Restif was sniffing along the footpaths of the libertine novel, others were taking the high road for increasingly refined works in which jaded sophisticates pursue young ingenues not simply for pleasure but to play complex mind-games, taking an icy thrill in flaunting the concepts of decency, reputation, and discretion to which their decadent set paid lip service. A superb, compact example can be found in the bleakly titled *No Tomorrow* (*Point de lendemain*, 1777) by Vivant Denon (1747–1825). In this novelette an unnamed narrator recalls a whirlwind one-night stand back

when he was only 20—which he emphasizes often to excuse his naïveté—when he was seduced by the friend of his current lover (both older married women), who picked him up at the opera and took him to her château in order to hide *her* current lover from the husband she is reuniting with after eight years, who plays along in order to continue pursuing his own affairs. Denon propels the plot along with Voltairic velocity so that the reader is as disoriented as the narrator, both of us willing victims to seductive sophisticates. The next morning the narrator tries to sort out what happened: the husband "M. de T— had ridiculed and then dismissed me; my friend the Marquis was duping the husband and mocking me; and I was paying him back in kind, all the while admiring Mme de T—, who was making fools of us all, without losing her dignity" (32). In the final lines of the tale, when the narrator usually points the moral, he admits, "I looked hard for the moral of this whole adventure . . . and found none" (32).

That's a shocking way to end a novel at a time when readers not only expected a moral but expected it to be spoon-fed to them, not left to decipher for themselves. It raises a host of unanswerable questions, such as those asked by the protagonist of Milan Kundera's *Slowness* (1993), an extraordinary critifiction written around *No Tomorrow*:

> What Madame de T. did with him—was that routine for her, or was it a rare, even thoroughly unique adventure? Was her heart touched, or is it still intact? Has her night of love made her jealous of the Comtesse? . . . But how did he really feel? And how will he feel as he leaves the château? What will he be thinking about? The pleasure he experienced, or his reputation as a ludicrous whelp? Will he feel like the victor or the vanquished? Happy or unhappy?
>
> In other words: is it possible to live in pleasure and for pleasure and be happy? Can the ideal of hedonism be realized? (chap. 45)

The hedonistic experience leaves Mme de T— feeling blissful, the narrator feeling baffled and used, but their feelings are not the only ones to be considered; even more relevant are the reader's feelings. Like an experienced libertine, Denon seduces the reader with expert "stagecraft" (as Kundera calls it), atmospheric imagery regarding the moon, and sensuous details. The actual act of fornication is over in a blink; the emphasis is on

"the preliminary pleasures" (17). As in Bastide's *Little House*, foreplay and the *idea* of sex take prominence over the physical act, which is behind the novelette's mischievous epigraph: "The letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life"—though the astheticization of sex is hardly what Paul meant in his second letter to the Corinthians (3:6). One might also ask whether *No Tomorrow* predicts the future in store for amoral, double-timing French aristocrats like M. and Mme de T— come the Revolution, though perhaps only a sansculotte would ask that. To ask pesky questions is perhaps to miss the point; sex doesn't have to be meaningful and art doesn't have to be moral. Better to ask *was* it good for you than *is* it good for you, and *No Tomorrow* was very good for this pushover.

Even more questions are left unanswered in the greatest libertine novel of the 18th century, the notorious *Dangerous Liaisons* (*Les Liaisons dangereuses*, 1782) by Pierre Choderlos de Laclos (1741–1803). What are we to think of a novel whose alluring, intelligent protagonists flaunt conventional morality and destroy people around them? How much sympathy should we feel for their less intelligent, drearily conventional victims? How do we warm up to its icy ironies? How much trust can we put in a novel comprised of letters that turn out to be not the unmediated expression of a character's feelings (the appeal of epistolary novels) but, more often than not, fictions intended to manipulate their recipients, rhetorical ploys rather than true confessions?

Dangerous Liaisons excels both as a gripping narrative and as a metacommentary on novels. Revenge propels the lurid plot: the Marquise de Merteuil—a haughty young widow who is either the villainess or the heroine of the novel, depending on your standards—is insulted to learn that a lover named Gercourt who recently left her plans to marry a 15-year-old fresh from the convent named Cécile. Merteuil enlists the help of an ex-lover named Valmont—an experienced libertine and the only man she ever really cared for—to deflower Cécile and expose her and Gercourt to public humiliation after their marriage. Valmont demurs, partly because seducing Cécile sounds like child's play, but largely because he has a greater challenge in Madame de Tourvel, the pious, 22-year-old wife of a man conveniently out of town for a while. In one of many deliberate parallels to Rousseau's *Julie*, Cécile is being courted by her 20-year-old music tutor, the Chevalier Danceny (a decent guy but not an advantageous match according

to her mother). Valmont befriends him and later Merteuil beds him as part of their revenge plot, but otherwise Valmont ignores Merteuil's repeated requests for help, to her growing annoyance, fueled by her growing jealousy of Tourvel. But when Valmont learns Cécile's mother has been bad-mouthing him, he seeks his own revenge by raping the girl, which only endears her to him, and thereafter the teen enjoys fucking him while still pining for her music tutor. After superhuman efforts to resist Valmont's Pepé Le Pew persistence, Tourvel finally succumbs, which pushes her toward a fatal nervous breakdown. After Valmont learns Merteuil has interfered with his relationship with Tourvel (whom he unexpectedly comes to love), they declare war, but he picked the wrong marquise to mess with, for she tells Danceny what Valmont has been doing with his sweetheart, which leads to a duel where the tutor fatally wounds Valmont, who has just enough time to turn over to him all of Merteuil's incriminating letters, which he makes public. Concluding with a heavy sense of horror evoking Greek tragedy, Valmont dies, Tourvel dies, Cécile takes religious vows (thus breaking off her engagement), Danceny goes into hiding, and Merteuil—her revenge achieved but her reputation ruined and her face disfigured by an attack of smallpox—leaves Paris for Holland, no doubt to begin a new round of dangerous liaisons.

"I resolved to write a work which should stand out from the ordinary," Laclos claimed,[207] beginning with the ordinary reader response to a novel's protagonist. The first letter we read is from Cécile to a convent chum, filled with childish excitement at the prospect of marriage, but any expectation this will be the ordinary story of ordinary obstacles on the path to the wedding chapel is dashed by the second letter, in which Merteuil writes Valmont to dish up her plans for revenge. Immediately the reader's instinct to side with a novel's protagonist is confused: do we concern ourselves with Cécile and the threat against her insipid innocence, or do we get in the carriage with those *far* more interesting people? Who do we root for, Team Cécile-Danceny or Team Marteuil-Valmont? If the former, how does that change when we learn how avidly Cécile liaisons with Valmont and Danceny with Merteuil? If the latter, how evil are you, exactly? Few readers rooted for Lovelace to overcome Clarissa in Richardson's novel—Laclos's other model after *Julie*—but I'm guessing more than a few took

guilty pleasure in seeing Valmont bag both pretty little Cécile and the redoubtable Tourvel. Valmont seduces them, Laclos seduces us.

Merteuil's case is even more complicated: a textbook villainess during the first half of the novel—scheming, arrogant, hypocritical, dishonest; in fine, a haughty bitch with no redeeming qualities—she checks our hisses after we read her long, autobiographical letter in the middle (no. 81), in which she tells Valmont that her principles "are not, like those of other women, discovered by chance, accepted uncritically or followed out of habit. They are the fruit of my deepest reflection," and she goes on to explain how from an early age she learned "to observe and reflect"; she paid "scant attention" to what adults "were so anxious to tell me, but I thought long and hard about what they were trying to hide from me." In the spirit of the Enlightenment, she developed a desire for knowledge greater than her desire for pleasure, and educated herself: "In novels I studied manners; in the philosophers, opinions"; widowed at an early age, she refused many offers to remarry, she writes Valmont later, "purely so that no one should have the right to criticize my actions. It was not even for fear of not being able to do what I wish, for I should always have ended up doing that; but it was because it would have annoyed me that anyone had the right to complain about it" (152). Fiercely independent, refusing "to accept the servility that society imposes on women,"[208] allowing no man to make a fool of her, the Marquise de Merteuil has many qualities of a feminist icon, for she's easily the smartest and most clear-eyed woman in the novel, perhaps in all of 18th-century French fiction. Unfortunately she uses her intelligence for cruel intentions—she's "a hundred times worse" than Valmont (6)—but the conflicted reader notes that the author allows her to escape at the end, damaged but still standing, and not every reader is sorry that he did so.

Merteuil and Valmont represent the deterioration of the libertine tradition into perversion; they are only a few years away from turning into Sade's sex monsters. For Hylas in d'Urfé's *Astrea*, libertinism was a joyful if irresponsible activity, and it continued to be so in the novels of Sorel and Subligny; with the Duc de Nemours in *The Princess de Clèves*, the libertine becomes a more threatening figure, though still capable of love for the woman he stalks. He becomes more selfish and violent in Challe's

Illustrious French Lovers, and is exposed in Crébillon's serious novels as an amoral opportunist, a role now played by older women as well as by men. This predatory figure stalks the pages of Duclos and the pornographic novels of the period, is redeemed somewhat in *Thérèse the Philosopher*, and even recovers a little of Hylas's freewheeling attitude in *The French Adventurer* before relapsing into cunning calculation in *The Little House* and in Restif's novels. Yet all of these figures, up to and including Madame de T— in *No Tomorrow*, use sex for pleasure; in *Dangerous Liaisons*, sex is used primarily for revenge, humiliation, and punishment. For Valmont and especially for Merteuil, sex is a weapon, a means of gaining control rather than giving or taking pleasure, a crime committed in cold blood rather than a release of hot-blooded passion. Though there has always been execrable people like them (that is, they are not necessarily symbolic of the corrupt *ancien régime*), Laclos was the first to feature them so prominently in a French novel, and to make them as alluring as they are repulsive.

Laclos was a well-read man, aware of the libertine tradition in literature—Valmont is modeled on Crébillon's Versac,[209] and Merteuil preps for an assignation by reading a little of *The Sofa, Julie*, and two of La Fontaine's erotic tales, not to excite herself but "to establish in my mind the various tones I wished to adopt" (10)—and other French novels since the time of *Astrea* (alluded to in letter 51). One senses this army officer wanted to take Valmont-like revenge against the womanly genre, insofar as women were both the protagonists and the readers of most novels then. Undoubtedly speaking for the author, Valmont complains at one point of having nothing to read but "a modern novel which would be tedious even for a convent girl" (79);[210] like Voltaire, Laclos set out to write something an intelligent man could read without embarrassment. He mocks the respect shown in conventional novels for virtue, religion, morality, and the sanctity of marriage—Merteuil quips "if she had been his wife of ten years she could not have hated him more" (38)—and in Valmont's letters to Tourvel he parodies the rhetoric of romance so closely that it will be difficult to take such rhetoric seriously hereafter, and casts doubt on the sincerity of those novelists who used it in the past. Merteuil, who hates to be criticized but who freely criticizes Valmont at every opportunity, points out the shortcomings of both Valmont's letter to Tourvel and of novels in general:

> Moreover, one thing you have failed to notice, much to my astonishment, is that there is nothing so difficult in the matter of love as to write what one does not feel—write convincingly, I mean. You may use the same words, but you do not put them in the same order, or rather, you do arrange them in a certain order and that is sufficient to damn you. Re-read your letter. There is an order in it which exposes you at every sentence. I am sure your Présidente [Tourvel] is unsophisticated enough not to notice. But what of that? The effect is none the less a failure. That is the problem with novels. The author works himself up into a passion but it leaves the reader cold. *Héloïse* is the only one I should make an exception of. (33)

But even Rousseau's *Héloïse* (i.e., *Julie*) seems to be slighted elsewhere in the novel, as is *Clarissa*, and the entire passage can be read as Laclos's rebuke to his predecessors. (More advice to novelists from Merteuil, which Casanova could have used: "You should attempt to talk less about what you think and more about what the person you are writing to will wish to hear" [105].) His most outrageous parody of romantic rhetoric occurs in letter 48, in which Valmont pens Tourvel a pining letter of romantic longing on the naked buttocks of a courtesan between bouts, a hilarious masterpiece of double entendres. (I now suspect St. Preux wrote at least one of his love letters to Julie on the creamy bottom of a Swiss miss.) Responding to Merteuil's criticism, Valmont later tells her, "I took a lot of trouble with my letter, and tried to reproduce the impression of disorder, the only thing that can depict feeling. Anyway, I reasoned as badly as I knew how; for without talking nonsense, one cannot expresses one's love. And that is why, in my view, women are better than men at writing love letters" (70). After he seduces Cécile, Valmont writes passionate love letters to Danceny for her, "imitating her nonsense the best I could. . . . The girl was delighted, she said, to find she could write so well" (115). But when Danceny uses the same romantic rhetoric in a letter to Merteuil, she lets him have it: "My friend, when you write to me, let it be to tell me what you think and feel, and not to send me what I can read, without your help, more or less well expressed in the latest fashionable novel" (121). Similarly, after listening to Danceny's romantic troubles, Valmont snips, "Lovers' complaints are only worth listening to when there is a recitative or a grand aria" (59).

Dangerous Liaisons rapes the epistolary romance and leaves it disgraced; I'm surprised any novelist had the temerity to write another one after reading it.

Valmont and Merteuil self-consciously imitate novelists as they develop their revenge scenarios; comparing Danceny to d'Urfé's Celadon, they cast him as "our fine romantic hero" (57), tell Cécile that she "would make a marvellous character in a novel" (105), and take pleasure in their clever plotting: "I like novel and intricate ways of going about things," Laclos says in Valmont's voice (70). As a young girl Merteuil studied novels to learn manners, and realized that all she needed to succeed in the world was to "combine the talents of an actor with the wit of a writer" (81); she manipulates others as a novelist does his characters, but takes care not to leave any written traces, boasting to Valmont that if he had ever tried to betray her in his own words in the past, he would have had only "a series of unlikely facts which, had you recounted them, would have seemed like a badly structured novel" (81). Ironically, this is one of the letters that Danceny uses to ruin her at the end.[211]

Before that, Danceny (and the common reader of epistolary novels) was naïve enough to believe "a letter is the portrait of the soul. It does not possess, as pictures do, that cold, static quality which is so alien to love. It reflects our every emotion" (150). However, Laclos shows that letters are contrived constructions, often filtered through rhetorical models that can easily be counterfeited and that, more often than not, cloak rather than reveal the soul. While courting Tourvel by mail, Valmont writes a number of boilerplate love letters in advance that he can later post as needed. Even the more sincere letter-writers in Laclos's novel—Danceny, Tourvel, Cécile's mother, Valmont's aunt—hide their true feelings, show surprising naïveté, or parrot conventional pieties. For Valmont and Merteuil, letters are staged performances in which they try to top each other during their increasingly tense rivalry, which finally escalates into a war of words. As Lloyd Free puts it, they "do combat through words, the careful verbal record of their sexual victories. They perceive the letter as a potent art form and its principal weapon," and as rival authors "they combat each other precisely through artful recapitulation of the real events" (26). Recall that

Laclos was an artillery officer, and not surprisingly war imagery permeates the novel.

Of course all these letters are artful contrivances in that Laclos invented them, calling into question the sincerity of "letters" (i.e., literature) in general, though his first readers found them so convincing that they were sure the book was a roman à clef, a fiction encouraged by Laclos's introduction in which he claims (again imitating Rousseau's *Julie*) that it was edited down from a larger collection of letters in his possession. In that introduction, a masterpiece of smirking insincerity, he suggests that mothers give *Dangerous Liaisons* to their daughters on their wedding day; others were not amused, and in 1824 the Laclos-intolerant *cour royale* of Paris ordered the novel to be burned like a heretic.

Though the court would disagree, Oscar Wilde submits, "There is no such thing as a moral or an immoral book. Books are well written, or badly written. That is all" (preface to *The Picture of Dorian Gray*). *Dangerous Liaisons* is extremely well written: as Mylne points out (234–36), its letters are better motivated than those in most epistolary novels, take advantage of the dramatic possibilities of precise dating, change styles to reflect the different correspondents, and reveal greater psychological depths. The novel pushes realism to a new level: there is talk of contraception and menstrual cycles, a miserable scene in which poor people are turned out of their home for failing to pay the rent, and a bitchy tone that had not been heard in fiction before this. (See especially Valmont's early letter to Merteuil where he teases her about her promiscuity [4]; this is the way drag queens talk.) Laclos stumbles at the end by inflicting smallpox on Merteuil —too heavy handed in its symbolism, too unctuous a concession to conventional morality—but otherwise the novel is impeccable, arguably the greatest French novel before *Madame Bovary*.

Une Liaison dangereuse is the title of a modern edition of the letters of the fascinating Isabelle de Charrière (1740–1805). Born into an aristocratic Dutch family, educated to a level far beyond that of most women of her time, Belle van Zuylen (as she was known in Holland) made her literary debut at age 22 with a pert novelette—written in French and published anonymously—entitled *The Nobleman* (*Le Noble*, 1763), in which the spirited daughter of a stuffy nobleman defies him by tossing their ancestral portraits out the window as a bridge over muddy water to elope with a

young aristocrat whose nobility is of more recent vintage. Loving her father but refusing to be a victim of his "ridiculous prejudice," Julie pursues her own happiness while her dissolute brother, as snobbish as his father, marries a lady with "a squint and a hunchback; but the honor of uniting his arms and quarters to hers encouraged him to overlook all the rest. In any case he counted on consoling himself with less noble and less ugly creatures, and had too much greatness of soul to think it was obligatory to love the person one marries."[212] Belle's uptight Utrecht parents didn't appreciate this mockery of their class and suppressed the delightfully impudent work.

Charrière didn't resume writing fiction until her forties, by which time she was unhappily married and living in a village in Switzerland, where she remained the rest of her life, whiling away the hours playing the harpsichord, instructing her maid in Locke's philosophy, and corresponding with a number of intellectuals, including Johnson's Boswell (whose marriage proposal she declined) and later the novelist Benjamin Constant. In 1784 she published her third novella, *Letters of Mistress Henley* (*Lettres de Mistriss* [*sic*] *Henley*), a metafictional critifiction of "startling modernity," English Showalter said, deserving to "become a curricular standard like 'The Yellow Wallpaper' or *The Awakening*."[213] Annoyed by the male bias of a controversial novel entitled *Le mari sentimental* (The Sentimental Husband, 1783) by Samuel de Constant (Benjamin's uncle) about a reasonable husband driven to suicide by his unreasonable wife, Mrs. Henley informs a friend that she wants to send her a series of letters describing her frustrating experience with her own "reasonable" husband, giving her permission to publish them someday if she judges them "likely to arouse interest," for "I think many women are in my situation" (5). A lively, imaginative woman stuck with a fuddy-duddy husband devoted to "reason and moderation" who takes her away from London to live in the country, she slowly goes crazy with boredom and from guilt over her inability to settle down. Charrière conveys this with "startling modernity," as Showalter says: it reads like a *New Yorker* story from 1984, not something written in Switzerland in 1784, in that it favors small, telling gestures over big, dramatic events. For example, after her husband notes with polite disapproval that his wife's Angora cat is scratching his antique chairs—"'Ah!' said Mr. Henley, 'what would my grandmother say, what

would my mother say, if they were to see . . .”—Mrs. Henley argues that she should be able to feel at home in her bedroom. As he leaves “gently and sadly, resignedly,” she calls out after him, “No, it’s not the cat” (14)—implying it’s the marriage. (The cat, braver than its mistress, eventually runs off into the woods.) Charrière carefully chooses trifles like this to symbolize the larger problems the couple is having, trifles that few earlier novelists would have bothered with but that would ring true to other women in her situation. Unhappy and bored, anxious to please her husband and feeling guilty for failing to do so (and *resenting* having to do so), stuck with his child from a previous marriage who gets on her nerves, this desperate housewife is reduced to staring out her window:

> An old lime tree screens a rather charming view from from one of my windows. I wanted to have it felled; but when I looked closely, I myself could see that that would be a pity. The best I can find to do, in this verdant season, is to watch the leaves appear and unfold, the flowers blossom, a cloud of insects fly, creep, run every which way. I don’t understand any of it, I apprehend it but superficially; but I contemplate and admire this world that is so full, so alive. I lose myself in this vast whole that is so wonderful, I do not say so wise, for I am too ignorant: I know not its ends, I know neither its means nor its purpose, I do not know why the voracious spider is entitled to so many gnats; but I watch, and hours pass during which I have not thought even once about myself or my childish sufferings. (35)

That sounds like it was lifted from a story by Alice Munro or Ann Beattie, doesn’t it. Also quite modern is Charrière’s avoidance of closure: no one commits suicide or runs off with a secret lover. Pregnant, exhausted after a near-miscarriage, Mrs. Henley leaves us hanging at the end of her last, despondent letter: “In a year, in two years, you will learn, I trust, that I am reasonable and contented, or that I am no more” (42). Charrière’s readers were frustrated: which will it be? But the author knew the novella would be more powerful if it simply trailed off in quiet desperation. It became as controversial as the “appealing and cruel little book” (3) that provoked it, more so because it called into question the institution of marriage: the novella opens with an epigraph truncated from La Fontaine’s *Fables*: “I’ve

seen many marriages, etc."—leaving out the rest: "none of them tempts me."

Charrière followed this iconoclastic work with a longer, two-part epistolary novel entitled *Letters from Lausanne* (*Lettres écrites de Lausanne*, 1785, 1787), whose second half, subtitled *Caliste*, became Charrière's most popular work—possibly because it's the only one with a traditional ending.[214] A smart satire on Swiss society, the first half consists of letters written by a mother in Switzerland to a friend in Languedoc describing the trouble she's having finding a husband for her teenage daughter Cécile. Nothing remarkable happens, which is in itself remarkable; Charrière was content to describe the daily lives of these two women without melodrama, focusing on their unusually strong relationship. After a minor incident with a young English lord—he sneaks a kiss from Cécile while she's bandaging his cut hand—the mother has a frank talk with her daughter about men, going so far as to tell her that sometimes a suitor will get worked up by a visit to a nice young lady like her and, "should he have met a light woman in the street," will relieve himself into that common vessel.[215] Charrière isn't as frank as Laclos or Restif,[216] but her advice is refreshingly free of cant. Aware she's writing a different kind of fiction, Charrière distances herself from typical novels: "But recollect that my daughter and I are not a romance," Madame de C— tells her correspondent, "nor a moral lesson, nor an example to be cited" (93), and dismisses her conventional-minded questions: "you thought you were discussing a book or questioning an author" (94). (Charrière is obviously anticipating reader responses.) When the mother and daughter decide to take a break from Lausanne society at the end of part 1, they take with them *The Arabian Nights*, Hamilton's fairy tales, *Gil Blas*, and *Zadig*, but these fanciful fictions remain unread; Charrière isn't working in that male mode.

Part 2 goes off in an unexpected and disappointing direction. It consists almost entirely of a novella-length letter to Madame de C— from the governor of the English lord paying suit to Cécile, an overly sentimental account of how he fell in love with an actress-turned-kept woman named Caliste—she played that role in Nicholas Rowe's popular play *The Fair Penitent*—but didn't have the courage to defy his father's objection to their marriage. They both reluctantly marry other people, then later

coincidentally run into each other at a performance of *The Fair Penitent*, and once again fail to defy society (with lightning overhead threatening divine disapproval as well). She dies in the odor of sanctity, leaving him heartbroken. Like Rousseau's Julie, Caliste is an idealized figure, and though Charrière again exposes the ridiculous prejudices held by high society, the novella is too soap-operatic, fitter for the *Ladies Home Journal* than the *New Yorker*, in this man's opinion.[217] It does have autobiographical interest; like Mrs. Henley, Caliste is a portrait of the artist as a frustrated woman: "Caliste is Madame de Charrière's hidden self," Geoffrey Scott suggests in his charming and elegant biography, "or, if you will, her anti-self. Caliste is made up, singly and limpidly, of all those emotions she knew she could have lived by, and had not."[218]

Far more interesting, aesthetically and thematically, is a later novel by Charrière entitled *Three Women* (*Trois femmes*, 1796) published in London in the messy middle of the Revolution. Formally, it's an innovative hybrid of frame-tale narrative and epistolary novel, with selections from a Voltairean philosophical dictionary included near the end. It begins with some *salonnières* discussing a perennial literary question: in times of political crises, how should novelists respond, and in what manner:

> "For whom should authors be writing nowadays?" asked the Abbé de la Tour.
>
> "For me," replied the young baroness of Berghen.
>
> "These days people think, and dream, about nothing but politics," the abbé continued.
>
> "I detest politics myself," said the baroness, "and the ravages of war on my country [the Netherlands] make me long for distraction; so I would be most grateful to any writer who could agreeably engage my thoughts and feelings, for even a day or two."
>
> "My God!" the abbé exclaimed, after a moment's silence. "Baroness, if I might . . . ?"
>
> "You might," she said.
>
> "But no, I couldn't," said the abbé. "You'd find my style insipid compared with today's writers! Could people used to watching daring

> feats and flying somersaults enjoy watching a man simply walk in an ordinary way?"
>
> "They certainly could," replied the baroness. "They would be happy to watch anyone who walks with sufficient grace and speed toward an interesting destination."[219]

As the abbé promises to provide the baroness with a story that illustrates Kant's doctrine of duty,[220] which the salon has been discussing recently, we see Charrière metafictionly preparing the reader for her own novel, which will be both "distracting" and politically engaged, and written in a graceful manner, not like a circus act. (She probably had in mind Xavier de Maistre's *Voyage around My Room*, published in nearby Lausanne in 1795, and marveled over a few more pages below.)

In part 1, a delightful, self-contained novella, the abbé tells how he recently met three interesting women in a small village in Germany: 16-year-old Emilie, fleeing the Revolution with her aristocratic parents who die upon arrival; Emilie's earthy maid Josephine;[221] and Constance, a rich widow who inherited an ill-gotten fortune made in the Indies, on the run from those who want her to return the money. Emilie attracts the attention of Théobald, the young lord of the manor nearby, who decides to dump the insipid countess he's engaged to in favor of the French émigré, and Josephine attracts the less noble attention of Théobold's servant Henri, who impregnates her. In a novel where each major character represents a philosophical doctrine (but without the trappings of allegory), the pregnancy of hedonist Josephine causes utilitarian Constance to soften intuitionist Emilie's blind allegiance to stiff moral principles, while Kantian Théobald abandons duty (to his parents and to his fiancée) to elope with Emilie. It all works out for the best, only because everyone realizes that it's better "to relax the commitment to a moral theory," as translator Rooksby writes in her introduction, to practice "other important values such as benevolence, gratitude, and friendship" (xx). At a time when competing philosophical and political theories were tearing Europe apart, they wisely decide to cultivate their own gardens in Westphalia.

Part 2 begins with the abbé (i.e., Charrière) discussing his story with the rather dim baroness—"Your three women did not seem to me to prove

anything in particular" (99)—then shares with her a series of letters from Constance updating him on events in the village after he left. Part 1 was largely about Emilie's moral education; part 2 is about communal education. A great admirer of both Voltaire and Rousseau (whose *Emile* is evoked), Charrière describes a number of sociological experiments Constance and Théobald perform: when Josephine's baby and that of a different countess are born the same day and accidentally mixed up, our two *philosophes* look forwarding to seeing if "innate" class differences emerge, and when twins are born to a woman who dies in childbirth, Constance determines to name the girl Charles and the boy Charlotte, raise them identically, and see what if any gender differences develop. Théobald starts a school for the villagers and begins writing a *Political, Moral and Rural Dictionary* for their use in the manner of Voltaire's *Philosophical Dictionary*. (The entry for *liberty* reads: "Oh what a word! We never understand it, and nobody ever explains its meaning. It is a grimy flag; but as soon as it is unfurled, we march and follow it onward, toward any virtue, any crime, and to our deaths" [165].) This section displays the remarkable range of Charrière's interests and her suggestions for how society might be reorganized following the chaos of the Revolution. Constance realizes "We have been jolted out of the familiar rut that our lives used to follow" (121), and it is interesting to overhear Charrière rethinking cultural and gender matters and to offer new alternatives to old prejudices. The novel breaks off as Emilie, learning that French soldiers are hunting down aristocratic fugitives like herself, goes off with Constance and Théobald's father to hide in a small town, avoiding inflexible principles in favor of mobility, improvisation, and situational ethics, "despising all other grandiloquent nonsense" (175).

Three Women is a superb achievement: smart, innovative, irreverent, iconoclastic, fun to read but intellectually stimulating, and a demonstration that women—shut out from public discourse by French revolutionaries—were as qualified as men, if not more so, to suggests ways that France could reinvent itself. Isabelle de Charrière is easily the most impressive French woman novelist of the 18th century;[222] and if she's not quite at the level of Challe, Marivaux, Voltaire, Diderot, and Laclos, she has a distinction they lack: an asteroid is named after her—9604 Bellevanzuylen.

"And Bernardin de Saint-Pierre?" someone asks during a literary discussion in *Three Women* (123). This military adventurer and naturalist (1737–1814) wrote the once popular but deservedly forgotten *Paul and Virginia* (*Paul et Virginie*, 1788). A religiose confection of sentimental pap, it concerns two kids born to French émigrés on the island of Mauritius (east of Madagascar), who live in paradisaic circumstances until they reach puberty. Virginia's menarche is accompanied by a cataclysmic night of thunder and lightning, suggesting divine disapproval and the loss of Eden; the next day, her little garden "was completely devastated; dreadful gullies scored its surface; most of the fruit-trees had been uprooted; great piles of sand covered the borders of the meadows and had filled in the basin of Virginia's pool" (75). (I'm guessing an erection from Paul would have triggered the apocalypse.) Virginia's mother reluctantly sends her back to France to claim an inheritance from a mean old aunt; Virginia returns to Mauritius a few years later dressed in the latest fashion, but when a shipwreck forces her to choose between stripping and swimming or going down with the ship, she choses "to lose my life rather than violate my modesty" (132). Heartbroken Paul dies a few months later, followed quickly by everyone else—even their faithful dog Fido (Fidele)—except for an old man who narrates this Sunday-school lesson to a visitor 20 years later.

Paul and Virginia, like other pastorals, is a celebration of innocence, which less sentimental authors than Bernardin knew is too close to dangerous ignorance. Asked what she thinks of the novel, Charrière's Constance diplomatically says, "Paul and Virginia have no more enthusiastic admirer than myself" (123), but we recall that earlier she noted, "Innocence is a beautiful thing, . . . but it is still only a negative virtue. It offers no resources for handling difficult situations; it neither amuses nor consoles and provides neither advice nor assistance" (69). (In Virginia's place, Constance or Josephine would have stripped and dove overboard; Emilie may have required a little coaxing.) Ignorant of the evils of slavery, innocent Paul and Virginia return a slave to her master and asks him to pardon her; "filled with joy at the thought of the good action they had performed," they later learn she was "chained by the foot to a block of wood, an iron collar with three hooks fastened around her neck" (53, 56). There are a few other scraps of irony in the short novel: none of the French

émigrés object to slavery (which Bernardin abhorred), and though Virginia is praised for her submission to authority (her mother, her confessor, her god), for the old man Virginia's ludicrous death illustrates the tendency to "rush to our ruin, deceived by the very prudence of those in authority over us" (129). The author puts some stinging criticisms of France into the mouth of the old man, but the novel is such a pious paean to motherhood, innocence, and religion that these criticisms are toothless. Only its closely observed nature descriptions, based on Bernardin's own stay on Mauritius (1768–70), elicit admiration.

Of course *Paul and Virginia* was a huge best-seller and generated merchandising tie-ins for decades to come; but even though it is technically flawed and intellectually weak, it deserves a place in the history of the novel. It's a prime exhibit of the sentimental novel then in fashion, a key novel in the long tradition of pastoral extending from Longus's *Daphnis and Chloe* to Brautigan's *In Watermelon Sugar* and beyond, and its praise of nature and solitude provides a link between Rousseau and the Romantics. It is evoked in novels as various as Balzac's *Old Goriot*, Edgeworth's *Belinda*, Dickens' *Little Dorrit*, Flaubert's *Madame Bovary*, Hardy's *Jude the Obscure*, and Gaddis's *Recognitions*. It can even be blamed for the movie *The Blue Lagoon.*

Bernardin traveled all the way to the Indian Ocean for the setting of his novel, but Xavier de Maistre (1763–1852) found his without even leaving his room. Confined to quarters for 42 days in 1790 for dueling, this soldier wrote a short, 42-chapter novel entitled *Voyage around My Room* (*Voyage autour de ma chambre*, 1794) that takes advantage of the vogue for books of exploration to log a journey around his mind, boasting, "Cook's voyages, and the observations of his traveling companions, doctors Banks and Solander, are nothing compared to my adventures in this single region."[223] An admirer of Sterne's *Tristram Shandy* (cited in chap. 24), Maistre's delightfully eccentric voyage is nonlinear, "following no rule or method. . . . I too, when traveling in my room, rarely follow a straight line!" (4), because each object he notices sends him off on a tangent into either philosophical speculation or remembrance of things past. The noise his valet makes with the coffeepot in the morning, like Proust's tea-soaked madeleine, evokes his childhood, and his pink-and-white bedspread recalls the day he went

walking in the hills with his mistress, which Maistre expresses with Sternean sentimentalism:

> The lovely Rosalie went ahead; her agility gave her wings, and we could not keep up with her. Suddenly, having reached the top of a little hill, she turned toward us to catch her breath and smiled at our slowness.—Never before, perhaps, had the two colors whose praise I sing been so triumphant.—Her burning cheeks, her coral lips, her gleaming teeth, her neck of alabaster against a verdant background, caught the attention of all. We had to stop to behold her: I will say nothing of her blue eyes, or of the glance she cast at us, for this would divert from my subject, and because I try to think of these things as little as possible. Let it suffice that I have provided the best possible example of the superiority of these two colors over all the rest, and of their effect on man's happiness. (11)

Sternean sentimentalism is followed by Sternean typography in the chapter that follows, which reads in its entirety:

> Chapter XII
>
> . . . . . .
> . . . . . .
> . . . . . .
> . . . . . the little hill . . . . . .
> . . . . . .
> . . . . . .
> . . . . . .
> . . . . . .
> . . . . .

Maistre masterfully captures the restlessness of consciousnesses, recording "the variable and discordant assortment of sensations and perceptions that make up my existence" (38) in a startlingly modernist manner. He plays with the mind–body dichotomy (using the terms *soul* and *beast*) by dramatizing instances where his mind is off thinking about something else while his body performs some habitual task, nowhere more

amusingly than when the narrator half-awakes one morning with an erection and masturbates to his mistress's image while his soul is "still entangled in sleep's veils," sparking a sniffy debate between the awakened soul and "the *other*" in Sterne's charmingly smutty fashion (39).

The novel is a tribute to the powers of the imagination, which collapses time and space: "From the expedition of the Argonauts to the Assembly of Notables [a 1787 convocation]; from the very bottom of Hell to the last fixed star beyond the Milky Way, to the limits of the universe, to the very portals of chaos—such is the vast field I wander, lengthwise and breadthwise and entirely at my leisure, since I have as much time as space at my disposal" (37). Discussing his small library of novels, he praises them for taking him part of the way on his imaginary voyages and for inspiring him to add his own "diverse sensations I experience in those enchanted realms" (36). Not surprisingly, the librarian Jorge Luis Borges alludes to Maistre's novel in one of his stories;[224] at times it reads like one of his *ficciones*.

Voyage around My Room is an astonishing dramatization of the mind at play, of the relativity of time, of the workings of memory, of the psychopathology of everyday life—such as the effect of your clothing on your mood—all conveyed with charm and erudition. Aside from *Jacques the Fatalist*, it's the only successful 18th-century French attempt to emulate the profound whimsy of *Tristram Shandy*. A voyage of self-discovery, the novel concludes with Maistre's triumphant realization that the authorities can confine the body but not the imagination:

> Imagination, realm of enchantment!—which the most beneficent of beings bestowed upon man to console him for reality—I must quit you now. Today is the day that certain people, upon whom my fate depends, presume to give me back my freedom—as if they they had taken it away from me! As if it were in their power to steal it from me and prevent me from traveling, as I please, the vast, ever open space before me!—They may have forbidden me to travel through a city, one place, but they left me the entire universe: infinity and eternity are at my command. (42)[225]

In the chapter on his library of novels, Maistre finds "in this imaginary world a virtue, goodness, and unselfishness which I have yet to encounter thus combined in the real world I inhabit" (36). Without Maistre's note of sarcasm, Bernardin likewise felt that fiction provided comforting escapism, in his case offering the reading public an island getaway, a modern pastoral that hides its head in the tropical sand rather than face modern problems. "Literature is the daughter of heaven," says the old man in *Paul and Virgina*, "who has come down to earth to lighten the troubles of the human race. The great authors she inspires have always appeared in those times which all societies find most difficult to bear, times of barbarism and depravity" (113). But another novelist of the time thought it better to fight barbarism with barbarism, depravity with depravity. We can't put him off any longer: Mesdames et messieurs, Donatien-Alphonse-François, Comte de Sade.

The fiction of the Marquis de Sade (1740–1814) is the dark and bloody crossroads where d'Urfé's way and Sorel's way meet for a midnight orgy. His novels are like photographic negatives of those in d'Urfé's romance/pastoral tradition, where the quest for virtuous love is turned into a crime spree of violent sex, set in inverted paradises where passions are satiated rather than sublimated. Like Sorel and his iconoclastic followers, Sade mocks the proprieties of the conventional novel, messes up its pretty face, toughens it up to meet the revolutionary changes underway. Virtually every early-modern French novelist followed Horace's precept "to delight and to instruct"; taking a tough-love approach, Sade *horrifies* and instructs. In his view, the reader needs to be shocked, not delighted. A soldier and a notorious libertine, Sade might never have become a novelist had he not been thrown in jail for his scandalous exploits. Incarcerated in 1778, partly due to the machinations of his mother-in-law, the furious Sade decided to declare "all-out war on the society that had judged and imprisoned him, and on that virtue which it preached as the ultimate good."[226] Earlier, Sade had written some poetry, plays, a travel account to Italy, and the brief "Dialogue between a Priest and a Dying Man," but his weapon of choice for his all-out

war was fiction: Sade hijacked the novel as a vehicle for his terrorist attacks on civilized values and Enlightenment thinking.

Taking Boccaccio's *Decameron* as a model for his first attack, Sade between 1782 and 1785 wrote *The 120 Days of Sodom* (*Les Cent-vingt journées de Sodome*), "the most impure tale that has ever been told since our world began," he warns the reader, "a book the likes of which are met with neither amongst the ancients nor amongst us moderns" (253). The novel starts off grim and menacing, not with the stagy foreboding of a Gothic novel but with the sickening feeling that something seriously fucked-up is going to happen.[227] In the early 18th century, four representatives of the oppressive ruling classes—a nobleman (the Duc de Blangis), a clergyman (the Bishop of X***), a magistrate (the Président de Curval), and a banker (Durcet), all of whom profited from Louis XIV's military expansionism—plan an elaborate, four-month orgy at Durcet's hidden château in Switzerland during winter. Assembling 42 others for their orgy (their four daughters, four female storytellers, eight male prostitutes, and 16 kidnapped boys and girls between the ages of 12 and 15, plus staff), the plan is for each *historienne* to narrate five stories a night for a month, each illustrating 150 examples of sexual depravity, moving month-by-month from "simple" to "murderous" ones to amass a 600-entry catalog of perversion. Early on, the narrator boasts: "he who should succeed in isolating and categorizing and detailing these follies would perhaps perform one of the most splendid labors which might be undertaken in the study of manners, and perhaps one of the most interesting" (218). (Of course there's the less splendid likelihood that Sade was also making deposits in his spank bank of masturbatory fantasies.) As the debauchees listen to the stories during the evening, they are inspired to act out some of them with their victims, though all day long they indulge in repulsive activities, ending each night in a drunken orgy. They begin mutilating their sex slaves—"Horrid things were perpetrated in the salon" (669)—then torturing them to death. At the end of the 120 days, only 16 of the original 46 participants remain alive.

Sade didn't complete the novel. In the autumn of 1785, he wrote out a working draft (with notes to himself for revision) consisting of a 70-page introduction, the first month's cycle of stories—basically an account of all

the perverts encountered by a whore named Madame Duclos during her long career—and an outline for the remaining three parts. He set it aside to work on other things, but lost the manuscript when he was transferred from the Bastille to the Charenton lunatic asylum in 1789, to his bitter frustration.[228] Perhaps it's just as well, for the novel was doomed to fail for several reasons. First, the mesmerizing introduction, with its chilling backstories of the protagonists and their philosophies, makes the novel's points well enough—the abuse of power; sex abuse as a metaphor for the predatory relationship between the upper and lower classes; the indifference of Nature to virtue and morality, and the instinct for cruelty it plants in some individuals; the erotic excitement of crime; selfish pleasure as the only goal in life—rendering further elaboration almost unnecessary.[229] Second, the further elaboration is boring: the quality of writing falls off once Duclos begins her stories, which are just obscene anecdotes, not well-made tales as in the *Decameron*. And Sade knew this: as early as the first day, Curval interrupts Duclos to complain her stories lack the "searching details" necessary for him to "judge how the passion you describe relates to human manners" (271), and on the final day of her narration, Duclos beseeches "Messieurs to have the kindness to forgive me if I have perchance bored them in any wise, for there is an almost unavoidable monotony in the recital of such anecdotes; all compounded, fitted into the same framework, they lose the luster that is theirs as independent happenings" (568).[230] The material surrounding her tales is equally sketchy, just repetitious tallies of who does what to whom and in which orifice. There are a few striking images, as when the hostility between sex and religion is evoked (albeit somewhat ludicrously) by the Duc's "heaven-threatening prick," which "had not the least inclination to lower the awful stare whereby it seemed bent on cowing heaven" (294–95). But most of it is cliché-ridden porn that gets old in a hurry. In his "Essay on Novels" Sade says a novelist's main duty is to "maintain the [reader's] interest until the very last page" (16), but even many of Sade's admirers lose interest after a hundred or so pages, as I did when I attempted *Sodom* in my twenties. Finally, Sade quickly realized that his "framework," engineered with anal precision, was flawed; he organized it so as to progress from simple to murderous perversions, but that meant concealing extreme ones (involving

coprophagy and torture) that take place offstage from day one.[231] There are a dozen occasions in the beginning where the narrator apologizes for having to draw the curtain over certain outrages because "the structure of this very complex fiction prevents us from revealing [them] at this stage" (379), and near the end of part 1 he even feigns ignorance of what's going on behind closed doors. (It could be argued he's deliberately creating suspense, but given the abominations he recounts in part 1, only a pervert would be titillated to read on.) On the other hand, he reveals some matters too soon, as he admits on a manuscript page following part 1 entitled "Mistakes I Have Made" (570). A first-time novelist, Sade became a prisoner of his own devise; a more experienced writer would have found a way to have his cake and whip it too.

Had Sade finished *The 120 Days of Sodom*, the result would have been a daunting, 1,000-page compendium of perversion, a shocking supplement to Diderot's *Encyclopedia*, anticipating by a century Krafft-Ebing's *Psychopathia Sexualis*, but probably of more interest to students of aberrant psychology than those of literature. The 500 foam-flecked pages that survive are admirable only for their balls-out daring. Earlier French novelists, as we've seen, had criticized their culture's failings, questioned the validity of religion and of concepts like virtue and honor, and had even edged toward greater realism in sexual matters. But Sade pushes all this to unprecedented extremes, making explicit what they left implicit, excessing in exaggeration, transgressing every boundary, inverting all norms, and roughly mating pornography with psychopathology for a no-holds/holes-barred assault on everything the French held sacred. Sade especially intended the novel as a fuck-you to the corrupt judicial system that imprisoned him in the prime of life; he has Curval say,

> Everyone knows the story of the brave Marquis de S*** who, when informed of the magistrates' decision to burn him in effigy, pulled his prick from his breeches and exclaimed: "God be fucked, it has taken them years to do it, but it's achieved at last; covered with opprobrium and infamy, am I? Oh, leave me, leave me, for I've got absolutely to discharge"; and he did so in less time than it takes to tell. (495)

As the title indicates, the sexual orientation of *Sodom* is homosexual, not because Sade was one but because he knew that would make it more shocking, especially since sodomy was punishable by death. The novel's defiant deviancy is finally more revolting than revolutionary, but Sade's uncensored exposure of the darkest aspects of human nature, his vicious repudiation of all civilized values, is frightening and unforgettable. Sade would develop the same themes in his later, more accomplished novels, but never with as much enraged ferocity.

Having grunted all that out of his system, Sade turned to a more publishable project, *Aline and Valcour; or, The Philosophical Novel*, which he wrote in the Bastille between 1785 and 1788.[232] This extravagant, 700-page epistolary novel falls roughly into quarters: the first and last fourths concern the doomed romance of 19-year-old Aline Blamont and her 30-year-old boyfriend, M. de Valcour. (His backstory, which he relates in letter 5, resembles Sade's in many respects.) Although Aline's mother approves, her father forbids marriage: this lecherous judge has reserved Aline for his libertine buddy, the banker Dolbourg. (This sexually insatiable pair recall the magistrate and financier in *The 120 Days of Sodom* and fulfill the same function: personifications of France's corrupt judicial and financial systems.) The father sends his wife and daughter to their country estate, where they are joined by Valcour's friend Déterville and his new wife. In the woods nearby, they come across a young woman who has just given birth; her story suggests she might be Mme de Blamont's lost daughter Sophia, though actually she was a sex slave to both Blamont and Dolbourg. Departing even further from the romance template—which usually doesn't include sex slaves and hints of incest—Aline and Valcour do not overcome the obstacles to their marriage: though Blamont tries and fails to bribe and then assassinate Valcour, he nearly succeeds at forcing his daughter to marry odious Dolbourg (after he poisons his wife), but Aline fatally stabs herself, and Valcour retreats to a monastery, where he eventually dies.

The second and third quarters of the novel consist of two narratives recited by a couple who lose their way and come across the group out in the country, who persuade them to tell their story, and which Déterville conveys to Valcour in two novel-length letters. Unlike the title characters, Sainville and Léonore are a proactive couple who defied parental objections to their

marriage, performed their own wedding ceremony, and managed to find happiness after an incredible series of adventures. Sainville explains how he smuggled Léonore out of the convent to which her parents confined her—a racy tale that involves crossdressing, flimsy clothing, and a Catholic statue—then took her to Venice, where she was kidnapped. For the next three years, Sainville searches for her worldwide: first to Turkey, then to Morocco and central Africa, then to Tahiti, and eventually back to France where he finds her performing in a Bordeaux playhouse. Sainville devotes most of his narrative to describing two contrasting societies: the tyrannical African kingdom of Butua (a libertine dystopia, erotic only in a *National Geographic* kind of way), and the utopian island of Tamoé.[233] Then Léonore tells her story, describing how she maintained her chastity in an African harem and against the assaults of various pirates, robbers, monks, and other lechers. Some critics are harsh on Léonore, sharing Geoffrey Gorer's opinion that "She is a most disagreeable character, cheating and lying, using her beauty to lead men on and exhort favours and help from them with promises she has never any intentions of fulfilling" (71); but given the nature of the men she has to deal with, and of the world she has to live in, her actions seem justified. She survives; the more conventionally admirable Aline doesn't. (Léonore turns out to be Mme de Dolbourg's long-lost daughter, linking this story with the main narrative.) There's little attempt at characterization here (or in Sade's other novels): aside from Léonore, who grows as a result of her experiences, Sade's characters are static stereotypes and/or spokespersons for philosophical views. During their adventures – which overlapped at many times, unbeknownst to them – Sainville and Léonore discuss philosophical issues at length with various people (hence the novel's subtitle), unconventional thinkers through whom Sade airs his views on moral relativity, politics, sex, gender roles, culture, climatology, religion, slavery, inequality, war, cannibalism – an encyclopedic range of topics that he will expand upon in later novels.

The philosophical and geographical range of *Aline and Valcour* is matched by its literary diversity. Sade's "Essay on Novels" shows that he was thoroughly familiar with the long history of the novel (he goes back to the ancient Egyptians) and here in his first "public" novel Sade pays homage to its various permutations. The epistolary form and the Aline +

Valcour story-line is indebted to Richardson's *Clarissa* and Rousseau's *Julie*, two novels he admired that likewise deviate from the romance norm by ending in tragedy. The group in the country allude to Arthurian romances and unknowingly reenact the 17th-century heroic romance when they encounter strangers and encourage them to recite their lengthy stories while the main narrative cools it heels. The Sainville + Léonore story arc is based on ancient Greek novels—in which romantic couples are separated and undergo a series of outrageous adventures before reuniting—but also on a century's worth of French utopian/imaginary voyages. Sade adds the *conte philosophique* to the orgy of genres intertwined in *Aline and Valcour*, along with scenes that recall Gomberville's *Polexander*, Prévost's *Cleveland* and *A Modern Greek Woman*, and Rousseau's *Emile*.[234]

Although Sade avoids the sexual explicitness that characterizes his other novels, he pushes it right to the edge. When the magistrate and banker arrive at the country retreat, Déterville warns his correspondent Valcour that he needs to depart from literary decorum, which doubles as Sade's justification for his m.o.: "Unfortunately, I have two libertines to describe; you must therefore prepare yourself for some obscene details and forgive me for picturing them. I am unable to paint without colors; when vice is under my brush, I sketch the shades so much better if they produce outrage; to draw pretty pictures would be to make vice lovable, which is far from my intention."[235] Sade knew that some readers found certain fictional libertines "lovable" and used that as his excuse to paint it black. Sade's wife Renée-Pélagie, who smuggled the manuscript out of prison and read it, wrote her husband a lengthy letter about it and challenged him on this point. Objecting to the detailed horrors his villains perform, she writes: "One must expose [such persons], so your argument goes, in order to hate them and defend oneself from them. There's truth in that, but when this becomes the only goal of the work, there's a point at which the process [of depicting evil] must stop. . . . Such details make [the book] unreadable to honest people, and that's a pity."[236] She couldn't have known that *Aline and Valcour* is Sade Lite; the true horrors were still to come.

Taking a break from *Aline and Valcour* in the summer of 1787, Sade dashed off a 150-page novel in two weeks entitled *The Misfortunes of Virtue*, which planted the bad seed that would grow over the next 10 years

into the towering, 2,000-page suite of *Justine* and *Juliette*. A dour attempt at a Voltairean *conte philosophique*, the early *Misfortunes of Virtue* is a hard-hearted, R-rated story about two sisters abandoned at the ages of 15 (Juliette) and 12 (Justine); the elder embraces a life of vice and prospers, the younger clings to virtue and suffers endless torments until the final pages, when she is killed by a thunderbolt. Fancying himself the French Boccaccio, Sade originally intended the story for a large anthology to be called "Tales and Fabliaux of the 18th Century by a Provençal Troubadour," which was never published, though some of the tales made it into his *Crimes of Love* collection (1800).[237] Sensing the novel's potential, Sade expanded it the following year to twice its original size with philosophical discourses and erotic episodes that would earn it an X-rating, and published it anonymously in 1791 as *Justine, or Good Conduct Well Chastised* (*Justine, ou les malheurs de la vertu*), which has deservedly become Sade's most famous novel.

By this point in European literary history, the theme of virtue—specifically the preservation of a girl's virginity as the physical manifestation of virtue—had become so trite and predictable that Sade decided it needed to be upended and exposed as silly sentimentalism. "The scheme of this novel," he boasts in the dedication, ". . . is doubtless new; the victory gained by Virtue over Vice, the rewarding of good, the punishment of evil, such is the usual scheme in every other work of this species: ah! the lesson cannot be too often dinned in our ears!"—as it had been in novels from d'Urfé's *Astrea* up to Bernardin's *Paul and Virginia.* Like any innovator, Sade wants to take a new approach, far beyond what the occasional defector from this sentimental trend (like Richardson in *Clarissa* and Diderot in *The Nun*) attempted:

> But throughout to present Vice triumphant and Virtue a victim of its sacrifices, to exhibit a wretched creature wandering from one misery to the next; the toy of villainy; the target of every debauch; exposed to the most barbarous, the most monstrous caprices; driven witless by the most brazen, the most specious sophistries; prey to the most cunning seductions, the most irresistible subornations; for defense against so many disappointments, so much bane and pestilence, to repulse such a

> quantity of corruption having nothing but a sensitive soul, a mind naturally formed, and considerable courage: briefly, to employ the boldest scenes, the most extraordinary situations, the most dreadful maxims, the most energetic brush strokes, with the sole object of obtaining from all this one of the sublimest parables ever penned for human edification; now, such were, 'twill be allowed, to seek to reach one's destination by a road not much traveled heretofore.[238]

Mark the word *parable*: *Justine* is not a realistic novel, despite its explicit language—none of Sade's novels are—but rather a parable, an erotic fairy tale, a pornographic puppet show, which should take the edge off the horrors inflicted on Justine. Reading a Sade novel can be a masochistic experience—your safety word is *novel*: it's just a novel—but it's like eating human flesh: "One has merely to overcome an initial aversion; after that it is fair sailing" (*Juliette*, 582). At one point Justine beholds among a debauchee's sex toys "the waxen dummy of a naked woman, so lifelike that I was for a long time deceived by it" (673); don't be deceived by the dumb blonde Justine: she's just a voodoo doll via which Sade can prick the French society that paid lip service to virtue but was steeped in vice, the same society that publicly abhorred him but privately lapped up *Justine*. (It went through several editions in the 1790s before it was declared illegal, but it continued to be available under the counter for the next century and a half.)

The structure of the novel closely resembles that of Prévost's *Manon Lescaut*: Justine sister's Juliette, now Madame de Lorsange, is sitting in an inn with her lover, Monsieur de Corville, when she spots a carriage transporting a criminal, whom she suspects is her long-lost kid sister, and they arrange to have a private interview with her so that she can tell her story. (There's even a break in the narrative two-thirds through, the same point at which Prévost has an intermission.) Calling herself Thérèse, Justine unfolds a tale of woe in which her various acts of virtue over the last dozen years consistently backfired, always resulting in abduction and sexual torture, usually by successful, well-respected members of society. Juliette then reveals herself to Justine (parodying the recognition scene in earlier romances), her influential lover solves her legal problems, and our distressed heroine finds a moment's peace at Juliette's château until a

thunderbolt kills her. In a transparently insincere sop thrown to conventional morality, Sade explains that Juliette interprets Justine's electrocution as "a warning issued to me by the Eternal" (742), and instantly gives up her rewarding life of vice to become a Carmelite nun. You can practically hear Sade laughing up his sleeve.

By allowing Justine to tell her own story, Sade partly solved the structural problem he faced in *The 120 Days of Sodom*: the sexual assaults upon Justine mount from awful (rape) to horrific as the novel progresses without any awkward apologies for withholding details, aside from Justine's occasional reluctance to repeat some of the worst things she heard and experienced, and which actually works in the novel's favor: it leaves some things to the reader's imagination (as *Sodom* did not) and, as John Phillips points out, it obliges the narrator "to employ euphemisms for a more interesting use of the language . . . and helps to create nice touches of an ironic humour" (103). Justine speaks in the language of sentimental novels and popular piety, and the clash between her pretty diction and ugly reality exposes the vapidity of novelese. Like most novelists of his time, however, Sade abuses the first-person point of view by having Justine recite detailed conversations and long speeches; in reality, anyone recounting the story of her life to someone would summarize events, limiting herself to a few quotations at most. When Justine mentions a letter she once received, she conveniently has it on her, even though her narrative indicates she's been stripped of her clothes and belongings repeatedly since then. Too, Sade often forgets he's writing from Justine's POV, lapsing into his own voice and narrating sex acts in terms that never would have occurred to straitlaced Justine (especially the hilariously blasphemous religious imagery). Are we to believe a virtuous girl like Justine would use language like this when recounting an attack of sodomy?:

> Octavie weeps and weeps unheeded; fire gleams in the impudicious monk's glance; master of the terrain, one might say he casts about a roving eye only to consider the avenues whereby he may launch the fiercest assault; no ruses, no preparations are employed; will he be able to gather these so charming roses? will he be able to battle past the thorns? Whatever the enormous disproportions between the conquest and the assailant, the latter is not the less in a sweat to give fight; a piercing cry

> announces victory, but nothing mollifies the enemy's chilly heart; the more the captive implores mercy, the less quarter is granted her, the more vigorously she is pressed; the ill-starred one fences in vain: she is soon transpierced. (617).

There's no motivation for Justine to dramatize the incident like this in such terms; she's not one of those coquettes we've seen in earlier French novels who, consciously or not, titillate their auditors; this is just Sade writing in his default mode. Much later it occurs to him that he should justify such detailed accounts, so Justine interrupts her narration to ask her auditors:

> But how can I abuse your patience by relating these new horrors? Have I not already more than soiled your imagination with infamous recitations? Dare I hazard additional ones?
>
> "Yes, Thérèse," Monsieur de Corville put in, "yes, we insist upon these details, you veil them with a decency that removes all their edge of horror; there remains only what is useful to whoever seeks to perfect his understanding of enigmatic man. You may not fully apprehend how these tableaux help toward the development of the human spirit; our backwardness in this branch of learning may very well be due to the stupid restraint of those who venture to write upon such matters. Inhibited by absurd fears, they only discuss the puerilities with which every fool is familiar, and dare not, by addressing themselves boldly to the investigation of the human heart, offer its gigantic idiosyncrasies to our view." (670–71)

This justifies Sade's explicitness, but not Justine's; it is an important statement of Sade's artistic credo, but for artistic reasons he should have placed it near the beginning.

The many speeches Justine unrealistically recites, unrealistically delivered by thieves and lechers who all sound like they studied at the Sorbonne, provide an anthology of Sade's unorthodox opinions; via his villains, he airs his views in favor of infanticide, crime, sodomy, murder, perversion, and misogyny, and argues against virginity, religion, guilt, gratitude, and of course virtue. In the spirit of Voltaire's philosophical novels, Sade emphasizes the role education plays in forming these opinions. When

Justine's first employer tries to talk her into committing theft, he does so "with an erudition of which" she had not dreamt him capable (477), and after a character named Bressac delivers a sarcastic but well-informed lecture on the origins of Christianity, she adds it is "supported by readings and studies I, happily, had never performed" (517). Despite her self-admitted ignorance, however, she remains devoted to the unexamined "principles" she imbibed as a child (her schooling apparently ended at age 12) and has the smug arrogance to hold herself morally superior to those who have spent years in "thoughtful and sober study" *earning* their opinions (519). Does she deserve whipping for that? Sade thought so.

Of course, most of Sade's views are deliberately outrageous, pushing various Enlightenment ideas to extremes. One of his biographers writes, "Sade, as we know, loved to consider things like incest and murder in the abstract, and he delighted in finding arguments that justified them—in the abstract" (Schaeffer, 373). True, Sade orchestrated some violent orgies when younger, but when he was older and in a powerful position to behave like his fictional ogres (he was a magistrate briefly in 1793), he was criticized for his leniency and, in one case, refused "to act as chairman for a proposal he deem[ed] 'horrible . . . utterly inhuman' " (*Justine*, 105). He opposed the death penalty, "a belief unusual in the eighteenth century," Gray informs us, "even among progressive Enlightenment thinkers" (170). Atheism is the only unorthodox view he maintained outside the floating world of his fiction. But he took philosophy seriously—as thought experiments, not as applied ethics—and when he says in his dedication that *Justine* is "less a novel than one might suppose," perhaps he meant it is more "The very masterpiece of philosophy" he hypothesizes in the novel's opening line (457). Few people consider it that, but it firmly establishes *Justine* in the tradition of the *conte philosophique* as well as other genres (romance, picaresque, libertine). It also shows those gloomy English how a Gothic novel should be written: the lengthy scenes set in the Benedictine monastery and in the counterfeiter Roland's mountain castle are more terrifying than anything they ever wrote. As R. F. Brissenden points out, *Justine* is a parody of these genres, "the purpose of which is to invert and attack the values which they embody and express" (273). Though published anonymously, *Justine* is the first novel by Sade readers of his time would

have encountered, and that thunderbolt at the end announces a violent regime change in fiction.

In 1795, the year *Aline and Valcour* finally appeared, Sade also published anonymously a short novel in dramatic form entitled *Philosophy in the Bedroom* (*La Philosophie dans le boudoir*).[239] Occurring over a single afternoon, it concerns the sex education of a rich 15-year-old named Eugénie de Mistival at the hands of three adults: her friend Madame de Saint-Ange (who at age 26 has "been fucked by upward of ten or twelve thousand individuals" [228]); Madame's younger brother, the Chevalier de Mirvel; and a 36-year-old sodomite named Dolmancé, a typical Sadean spokesperson. (A well-endowed gardener named Augustin is also called in to lend a hand.) At the end of an afternoon seminar in libertinage, after Eugénie's mother comes to rescue her only to be raped with a dildo by her disobedient daughter and tortured by her tutors, Eugénie boasts: "Here I am: at one stroke incestuous, adulteress, sodomite, and all that in a girl who only lost her maidenhead today!" (359). Up until the horrific ending, *Philosophy in the Bedroom* is a spunky sex fantasy—another example of Sade Lite, relatively speaking. It praises sexuality with guilt-free enthusiasm and makes an exuberant plea to virgins to make much of time:

> Fuck, Eugénie, fuck, my angel; your body is your own, yours alone; in all the world there is but yourself who has the right to enjoy it as you see fit.
>
> Profit from the fairest period in your life; these golden years of our pleasure are only too few and too brief. If we are so fortunte as to have enjoyed them, delicious memories console and amuse us in our old age. These years lost . . . and we are racked by bitterest regrets, gnawing remorse conjoins with the sufferings of age and the fatal onset of the grave is all tears and brambles. . . . But have you the madness to hope for immortality?
>
> Why, then, 'tis by fucking, my dear, you will remain in human memory. (221)

Like d'Argens' *Thérèse the Philosopher*, which Sade admired, it offers sensible advice on contraception and masturbation, and it is practically a

public service announcement for anal sex.

But it's the least of Sade's major novels. The dialogic form is a throwback to quasi instructional erotica like Aretino's and Chorier's *Dialogues*, but which Sade interrupts with the inclusion of a 40-page political pamphlet entitled "Yet Another Effort, Frenchmen, If You Would Become Republicans" (296–339), which Dolmancé picked up that morning and reads to everyone in response to Eugénie's planted question on the role of institutional morality in society.[240] It's an intriguing essay—by turns reasonable and ridiculous, erudite and sophistic—and a daring departure from form by an author who felt order "is required even in the depths of infamy and delirium" (240), but it disrupts the rhythm of the novel (talk followed by sex, theory followed by practice) and mostly repeats points Domancé has already made (not to mention points Sade already made in earlier novels). And Sade knew this; after Domancé finishes reading, he confesses it reprises his previous discourses (it's implied he's the author), so Sade has Eugénie politely say, "I didn't notice; wise and good words cannot be too often uttered" (340), but that's a feeble apology for devoting nearly a third of a short novel to a redundant essay. Gray calls it "the boldest and most modernist literary ploy of his career," but also notes Sade thereby contradicts the *ancien régime* setting of the novel by addressing political issues of 1795 (358). I'm all for modernist ploys, but they need to work (like the essays in Bordelon's *Monsieur Oufle*, and those in Sade's next novel.) Equally clumsy is Sade's last-minute attempt to inject some drama by having the Cavalier object to Domancé's heartlessness; the young man gave no earlier signs of disagreement, and a few pages later he's recommending that Eugénie's mother be "Cut into eighty thousand pieces, after the manner of the Chinese" (362). Though flawed, the novel's relatively light, upbeat tone sets *Philosophy in the Bedroom* apart from Sade's other novels; even the gruesome scene at the end can be read as "black farce" (Phillips, 77), if you have a strong enough stomach. It's the shortest and most accessible of Sade's major novels, hence an ideal one for the virgin reader who wants to dally with the marquis before deciding whether to go all the way. For that, you'll want to embrace *Juliette.*

Needing money, Sade began to create an enormous two-headed novel that was published in 1797 as *La Nouvelle Justine, ou les malheurs de la vertu,*

suive de l'histoire de Juliette, sa soeur (The New *Justine, or The Disadvantages of Virtue*, followed by *The Story of Juliette, Her Sister*). He expanded the 1791 *Justine* by nearly 500 pages, "largely by the inclusion of the adventures of two minor characters," Gorer complains, voicing the critical consensus on the inferiority of this final version: "probability is destroyed, the natural development is lost, the story is drowned in a deluge of blood and semen" (75–76).[241] Sade switched from the original's first-person POV to third person, thereby stripping away the few threads of decency in which Justine had cloaked her tale and freeing himself to speak ever more bluntly. At the end of *La Nouvelle Justine*—one can't help think of *La Nouvelle Héloïse*, with Rousseau's benevolent Nature exposed as indifferent, if not malevolent—Justine escapes from her prison cell before being transported, runs in to her long-lost sister and is taken to her château, only to find herself duped and tupped once again, this time by two of Juliette's libertine friends. Then, before Justine's electrocution, Juliette tells her own story, which is where the published *Juliette* begins, ending nearly 1,200 perfervid pages later.

Unlike her stupidly idealistic sister, street-smart Juliette quickly learns that a life of vice, not virtue, is the key to personal fulfillment and financial success, even social prominence, a lesson drilled into her by a gallery of villainous enablers: first, Mme Delbène, the abbess of the convent at which young Juliette is educated, who includes her in her violent orgies and teaches her to follow her natural instincts for crime and sex. In all of his novels, Sade argues that Nature implants an instinct for good in some, evil in others, and that people should always go with their instincts; Nature in fact relies on such diversity for balance, even seems to approve of destructive people who emulate her ways—volcanic eruptions, floods, tornadoes, lethal lightning strikes, and other "acts of God"—though sometimes Sade's spokespeople argue that Nature is no more concerned with how we act than with insects. Sade is all over the place on this topic, but consistently rejects the nurturing Mother Nature embraced by Rousseau and other treehuggers. Equipped with "a magnificent ass" and convinced "one swims with the current or drowns battling it" (155, 218), Juliette graduates from the convent to a high-class bordello run by Mme Duvergier, where she refines her skills in sex and crime—always linked in Sade's

novels—and then becomes the protégé of one of the most disgusting men in the annals of literature, Monsieur Noirceuil, who, as his name suggests (*noir* + *seuil* = black portal) encourages Juliette to join the dark side for the blackest, most violent crimes imaginable (imaginable by Sade, that is, not by normal people). He is matched in villainy only by Monsieur Saint-Fond (*fond* = bottom, where he likes to take it), a powerful government minister and another of Juliette's customer/enablers. Anticipating Kipling's observation that "the female of the species is more deadly than the male," Sade gives his damsel *of* distress two female partners-in-crime: a rich widow named Mme de Clairwil and a poisoner/sorceress named Mme de Durand. (As noted earlier, Sade deplored supernatural effects in fiction, but he gives Durand a sylph to command and who has sex with Juliette, naturally, as does every other character in the book, including some animals.)

These figures represent the decadent deterioration of the libertine tradition. In Sade's lexicon, the libertine is not a freethinking lover, as in 17th-century novels, but a perverted, nihilistic criminal. Durand defines *libertinage* as "a sensual aberrance which supposes the discarding of all restraints, the supremest disdain for all prejudices, the total rejection of all religious notions, the profoundest aversion to all ethical imperatives" (1115), a far cry from the enlightened individualism Hylas and his girlfriend exemplify in d'Urfé's *Astrea*. In Sade's novel, easy-going, free-loving libertines like Hylas and Stelle turn into Bonnie and Clyde, or the "natural born killers" of Oliver Stone's 1994 movie.

The second half of Juliette's story, set in the 1770s, takes her from France to Italy, where Juliette fucks and robs a number of historical figures, including Pope Pius VI. (A black mass on the high altar in Saint Peter's Cathedral is merely one of Juliette's tourist stops.) During this "extended promenade through the most noisome hogwallows of dissoluteness" (1126), Juliette becomes an acute political scientist as she debates theories of governance with others, and also becomes one of literature's first drug addicts after discovering opium. (The novel's geographic scope is further augmented by an interpolated novella [pp. 815–909] concerning Clairwil's psychokiller brother and his crime spree through Holland, England, Sweden, Russia, and Turkey.) Amassing an incredible fortune—wealth and perversity is another recurring linkage in the novel—Juliette returns to

France at age 30 to find Noirceuil more powerful than ever (he later kills Saint-Fond and assumes control of France under Louis XVI) and her daughter Marianne grown to age seven. In the throes of a violent orgy with Noirceuil, Juliette allows him to rape the child and throw her into a roaring fire; mommie dearest even helps: "I too pick up a poker and thwart the unhappy creature's natural efforts at escape, for she thrashes convulsively in the flames: we drive her back, I say; we are being frigged, both of us, then we are being sodomized" (1186–87). In an outrageous parody of the happy ending of most romance novels, Juliette participates in a quadruple transvestite marriage: Noirceuil, dressed as a woman, marries one of his sons, then dressed as a man marries his other son dressed as a bride, while Juliette marries one lesbian dressed as a man, and then vice versa. The wedding party/honeymoon that follows is an unspeakably depraved orgy of incest and murder, crowned two weeks later by poisoning the town's water supply, sickening and killing some 3,000 people. On the last page of the novel, Noirceuil receives "the reins of government" from the king, Juliette and her libertine friends are all promoted to positions of power and wealth, and Noirceuil concludes: "from all this I see nothing but happiness accruing to all save only virtue—but we would perhaps not dare say so were it a novel we were writing," to which Sade's "execrable" (his word) sock puppet replies, " 'Why dread publishing it,' said Juliette, 'when the truth itself, and the truth alone, lays bare the secrets of Nature, however mankind may tremble before those revelations. Philosophy must never shrink from speaking out' " (1193).

That is how Sade wanted others to regard his novel: not as porn for libertines, not as an excuse to splash around in the cesspool of his depraved imagination, but as a heroic attempt to speak truth to power, to lay bare the secrets of Nature: the instinct for vice, the erotic relationship between sex and crime, the symbolic relationship between the will to political power and an addiction to perversion, between financial acquisition and corruption, and—in a godless universe—Nature's indifference, if not contempt, for humankind's unnatural moral codes, codes completely at odds with the laws of nature. He also wanted to lay bare the not-so-secret methods that the powerful use to subjugate the powerless: snake-oil religion, repressive politics (Machiavelli is cited a dozen times in the novel), and self-defeating morality. As Noirceuil implies above, writers (*especially* novelists) shrink

from speaking out, from telling the truth about the darker aspects of human nature: though named after him, sadism has always existed, needless to say, and takes many forms beyond the sexual. Throughout *Juliette*, Sade bangs away at this point, especially in his footnotes: he paraphrases rather than quotes from one of his historical sources—this is a very erudite novel, and many of the horrors he ascribes to real-life figures have been verified by historians—because "Brantôme merely sketched what we have thought desirable to paint in all its colors, and in all its truth" (288n8). He upbraids French philosophers for apprehending but not revealing nature's approval of "the crime of destruction" (175 and n16), and dismisses earlier libertine novelists who seem "to have scented the truth but [were] afraid to tell it," having no patience for those who hint at incest, for example, without dramatizing it (461–62, an interesting occasion for literary criticism as Juliette evaluates a monk's stash of porn novels). If Saint-Frond had his way, he would

> authorize the publication and sale of all libertine books and immoral works; for I esteem them most essential to human felicity and welfare, instrumental to the progress of philosophy, indispensable to the eradication of prejudices, and in every sense conducive to the increase of human knowledge and understanding. Any author courageous enough to tell the truth fearlessly shall have my patronage and support; I shall subsidize his ideas, I shall see to their dissemination; such men are rare, the State has great need of them, and their labors cannot be too heartily encouraged. (319)

The fact this is spoken by a fascist politician complicates matters—Sade inconsistently puts good sense and deranged nonsense into his characters' mouths, challenging us to make the distinction—but Sade's encouragement to writers to tell the truth is his most important legacy to the novel. Novels should always challenge power and prejudice, not collaborate with them. Those novelists like Restif de la Bretonne who thought Sade merely opened the sluice-gate for greater sexual realism and created a market for S&M porn missed the point entirely.

Sade made a mess of the new *Justine*, but in *Juliette* he seems to have determined to write his masterpiece. The philosophical discussions between

orgies are longer, better argued, more varied, and are bolstered with *Golden Bough*-style anthropological data and historical examples from a wide range of sources. (Not to be missed is the lecture on the history of papal perversion that Juliette delivers to the pope [752–55]; His Holiness replies with a 33-page defense of murder [765–98].) Although he wrote it quickly and injudiciously—"the Marquis wrote with a hose, not a pen," as William H. Gass quipped in his insightful review of the English translation—there are some striking images and rhetorical flights of fancy that exceed anything in his previous writings: when Abbess Delbène hears the name of the god she allegedly serves, "I seem to see all around me the palpitating shades of all those woebegone creatures this abominable opinion has slaughtered on the face of the earth. Those ghosts cry out beseechingly to me, they supplicate me to make use of all I have been endowed with of force and ingenuity to erase from the souls of my brethren the idea of the revolting chimera which has brought such rue into the world" (20)—which doubles as Sade's mission statement. During a lull in one of her earliest orgies in the nunnery, the 15-year-old Juliette casts a coarse spell of erotic glamour:

> All these scenes of fuckery were preceded by a moment of suspense, of calm; as though the participants wished in stillness and contemplation to savor voluptuousness in its entirety, as though they feared lest, by talking, they might let some of it escape. I was requested to be attentive, alert in my pleasure-taking; for later I should be expected to report on the experience. I swam in a wordless ecstasy; and, I confess, the incredible pleasures evoked by the strident and persisting activity of Télème's prick in my ass, the lubricious agonies into which I was plunged by the Abbess' tongue flitting over, needling my clitoris, the luxuriant scenes environing me, the combination of so many lascivious elements gripped my senses in a delirium and in that delirium I wanted to live an eternity. (57)

Later, as Justine seizes Noirceuil's "iron-hard member," Monsieur philosophizes on the terrible toll, both personal and political, taken by phallocentrism:

> "What a tale of crimes that prick has cost me!" he cried, "what a host of execrable things I have done in order that it might surrender its sperm a slight shade more hotly. Upon this globe's whole extent there is not a single object I'm not ready to sacrifice to its comfort: this tool is my god, let it be one unto thee, Juliette: extol it, worship it, this despotic engine, show it every reverence, it is a thing proud of its glory, insatiate, a tyrant; I'd fain make the earth bend its knee in universal homage to this prick, I'd like to see it guised in the shape of a terrific personage who would put to a death of awful torments every last living soul that thought to deny it the least of a thousand services." (185)

Sade makes intelligent use of animal imagery—"emulate the spider," Noirceuil advices Juliette, "spin your webs, and mercilessly devour everything that Nature's wise and liberal hand casts into the meshes" (180)—and often compares his radical individualists to the predatory tiger. Literalizing this recurrent simile, Sade even has a vicious Italian dress in a tiger's skin to perform in an orgy near the end (1104–6), though Juliette later boasts that "the most ferocious and the most savage beasts never attain such monstrosities" as she and her confederates do (1108). Sade takes the volcano as his "emblem of upheaval" (951); contemplating one at Pietra Mala in Italy, Juliette muses, "it is like my imagination igniting under the strokes of a lash applied to my ass" (575), and then insists on having sex on the edge of the volcano—as she does later at Vesuvius, where she murders her traveling companion.

There are times when Sade strains and pushes against the very limits of language, approaching verbal delirium as he tries to express "whimsies at once foul beyond words and beyond belief" (1128), which sometimes results in giddy imagery ("Moberti's balls danced against my buttocks" [1100]) or surrealistic hilarity, especially when he's describing acrobatic sex groupings—as when a hundred Italian women form a daisy chain of dildos, which reminds Camille Paglia of the "style of Busby Berkeley or the Radio City Rockettes."[242] In many mischievous footnotes Sade gooses his female readers to emulate his slutty heroine; Angela Carter praises him "for claiming rights of free sexuality for women" (36), though Juliette is more a parody of sexually voraciousness than a model for sexual liberation. She

and the other characters are almost comically larger than life, none more so than Sade's most amazing creation, a 7-foot-tall Russian cannibal with an 18-inch penis named Minski, who lives in a remote castle in Italy like something out of a medieval fable. The novel is all "delirium and extravagance" (539), ridiculously exaggerated, ludicrously over-the-top, which is part of its mordant appeal. "Scope and grandeur are sadly lacking in your conception of the thing," Clairwil had complained of Juliette's first mass-murder (416); Sade made sure no one could lodge the same complaint against *Juliette*.

Several critics have suggested that with *Juliette* Sade tried to salvage his lost *120 Days of Sodom*. Like the earlier novel's *conteuses*, Juliette deliberately arouses her male listeners (they interrupt her narrative occasionally to have sex), and as in *Sodom* the relationship between the powerful and the general populace is expressed in the grossest sexual terms.[243] There is the same encyclopedic ambition, explicitly so in Juliette's description of her memoirs as "this encyclopaedia of inhuman lewd practices" (1130);[244] there is a Sodality of the Friends of Crime with bylaws as detailed as those by the syndicate in the earlier novel, and numerous isolated mansions, castles, and whorrorhouses where sex abuses worse than those in *Sodom* take place; there is the same desperate attempt to say everything, do everything, destroy everything. If so, Sade succeeded: *Juliette* is far better than a completed *120 Days of Sodom* could ever have been.

Above all, *Juliette* is Sade's dark tribute to the godlike powers of the imagination. His horny heroine is in awe of the new president of the Sodality of the Friends of Crime because "his exceedingly criminal imagination often led him to invent things that surpassed all I had heard of, or even dreamt of, hitherto." Speaking via the president during one of the novel's many metafictional moments, Sade raves about the joys of artistic creation and of the superiority of the imagination over reality, of art over real life:

> "This imagination you laud in me, Juliette," he said one day, "is precisely what in you seduced me; for lasciviousness, diversity, and energy I have seldom seen its equal; and you have surely remarked that my sweetest

> pleasures with you are those I taste when, the two of us giving free rein to fancy, we fabricate ideal lubricities whose existence, unfortunately, is impossible. Oh, Juliette, how delicious are the pleasures of the imagination, and how voluptuously one follows out the lines of its dazzling constructions! . . . Truly, Juliette, I sometimes think the reality possessed is not worth the images we chase thereof, and wonder whether the enjoyment of that which we have not, does not much exceed the enjoyment of that which is ours: lo, there is your ass, Juliette, there before my eyes, and beauteous it is to my contemplation; but my imagination, a more inspired architect than Nature, a more cunning artisan than she, creates other asses more beautiful still; and the pleasure I derive from this illusion, is it not preferable to the one which reality is about to have me enjoy? There is beauty in what you offer me there, but only beauty; what I invent is sublime; with you I am going to do nothing that anyone else may not do, whilst with this ass my imagination has wrought, I might do things which not even the gods themselves would invent." (521–22)

You would think that after rebuilding *Sodom* and creating an even grander fictional world that Sade, like the god of the Jews, would have rested. But as insatiable as his perverted protagonist, he wanted more. After he was arrested in 1801 for writing *Justine–Juliette* and committed to the Charenton Asylum for the rest of his life, Sade began writing yet another massive novel entitled *Days at Florbelle* (*Les Journées de Florbelle*), which he finished in 1807, only to have it confiscated by the police that year and burned after his death at the request of his traitorous son Armand, who destroyed other papers and ignored his father's will.[245] Thirty pages of Sade's notes for *Florbelle* survive—they are included in a volume of his Charenton journals called *The Ghosts of Sodom*—which suggest it plowed the same ground as his earlier novels, but with a more complicated plot and a greater diversity of forms. Set in the year 1739, preceded by the epigraph "It is by laying life bare/That one brings readers back to virtue," Sade explained, "the totality of this work will be composed of eight dialogues, thirteen days, a treatise on morals, one on religion, one on the soul, one on God, one on the art of jouissance, the project of thirty-two brothels for men

and women for Paris, a treatise on antiphysics, and two novels, Modose's and Amelie's, in all ten large notebooks that should fill at least twenty volumes in print" (84). Since the 2,000-page *Justine–Juliette* occupied 10 volumes, that means a novel of at least 4,000 pages! One of the many parties takes place in a make-believe "Temple of Bacchus where human sacrifices are carried out, a bull-fight featuring women, and different firework displays where children are carried off by bombs and rockets" (110). The mind reels, the stomach heaves, but what a shame it was burned. Its confiscation must have crushed Sade, for all he wrote after that are three short, conventional historical novels, which even Sade specialists yawn over.[246]

Sade isn't the greatest French novelist by a long shot: he wrote too much too quickly, repeated himself ad nauseam, relied too heavily on stereotypes and clichés, mistakenly believed "anything is good provided it be excessive" (*Juliette*, 236), and abused the superlative case so often he deserved caning. Not the greatest, then, but one of the most influential. He showed novelists that there's nothing off-limits, nothing that cannot be not said; he encouraged novelists "to embellish and to astound. . . . What we expect from you are flights of invention, not rule-bound exercises" ("Essay on Novels," 16). His novels were available only for a decade before the puritanical Napoleon outlawed them—he described *Justine* as "the most abominable book ever engendered by the most depraved imagination," which Grove Press uses as a blurb on the back cover of their edition—so they didn't make much of an immediate impact on serious writers, with one notable exception. In 1798, an army officer and dramatist named Jacques-Antoine Révéroni Saint-Cyr (1767–1829) published a short novel entitled *Pauliska ou la perversité moderne* (Pauliska, or Modern Perversity) which, according to Julia Douthwaite, "bears a striking resemblance to the marquis de Sade's work" (195). Since this outré novel has not been translated, I'll let her describe it:

> In its bizarre scenes of experimentation, Révéroni Saint-Cyr borrows from contemporary work in pneumatics, chemistry, and electricity and mixes in the titillating effects of pornography. He conjures up the émigré mentality of postrevolutionary political angst by inventing fearful

> characters moving through a landscape that is physically varied but consistently nightmarish. The heroine is a young mother of noble Polish blood who must flee the Russian soldiers who have killed her husband and captured her home. As she makes her way through a war-torn landscape, she encounters melancholy foreigners, impoverished peasants, and other miserables who lament their misfortune and whisper of evils wrought by secret societies and political plots. . . . Its conflation of émigré conventions, postrevolutionary politics, pornography, and bizarre scientific machinery exemplifies the sociopolitical forces converging in the 1790s. (194–95)

Pauliska also exemplifies the legitimate descendants of Sade, not the countless pornographic novels, starting with Restif's *Anti-Justine*, that ripped off his sex scenes but ignored the philosophical discourses that transformed those scenes into powerful metaphors. Many 19th century writers expressed admiration for Sade—Flaubert, Baudelaire, Swinburne, Lautréamont, Nietzsche, Huysmans—but it wasn't until the 20th century that Sade's work inspired some writers to appropriate as he did the language of pornography for transgressive cultural criticism: I'm thinking of Guillaume Apollinaire, Georges Bataille, Jean Genet, Lawrence Durrell's *Justine*, of course, but also his earlier *Black Book*, William S. Burroughs's "Roosevelt after Inauguration" and his early novels, Pierre Klossowski, Chandler Brossard's *Raging Joys, Sublime Violations*, Mishima, certain novels by Robert Coover and Kathy Acker, Alasdair Gray's *1982, Janine*, Bret Easton Ellis's *American Psycho*, Samuel Delany's *Mad Man*, and Rikki Ducornet's *Fan-maker's Inquisition*, to name a few. Unfortunately, Sade also gave some novelists the "illusion that one comes to grip with reality only through the commission of evil," as a sophisticated character in Gaddis's *Recognitions* laments.[247] In this regard, Sade's novels are like a deadly virus that he deliberately let loose upon the world as the ultimate revenge; as a character in *Justine* says, "he is like unto those perverse writers whose corruption is so dangerous, so active, that their single aim is, by causing their appalling doctrines to be printed, to immortalize the sum of their crimes after their own lives are at an end; they themselves can do no more, but their accursed writings will instigate the commission of crimes,

and they carry this sweet idea with them to their graves: it comforts them for the obligation, enjoined by death, to relinquish the doing of evil" (611).

Up until about 50 years ago, Sade was not even mentioned in most histories of the 18th-century French novel, which usually ended with Bernardin's wimpy *Paul and Virginia.* But now the Marquis brings up the rear with his monsters from the id, seeing to it that the history of the early modern French novel ends not with a whimper but a gangbang. In the space of 200 years, from d'Urfé's pastoral *Astrea* to Sade's antipastoral *Days at Florbelle*, French writers transformed the novel from an elegant entertainment into a dangerous art.

Notes

1 Translated by Steven Rendall in the introduction to his English translation of volume 1 of *Astrea*, vii, hereafter cited by page number. For the rest of the novel, I'll be quoting John Davies' old translation by volume/page; his volume 2 is paginated 1–208, followed by 1–215 (probably typeset by two different shops), hence will be cited as 2A and 2B.

2 There is some controversy over how much of volume 5 is Baro's work rather than d'Urfé's, and one scholar has even suggested the concluding volume was written by another novelist named Marin Le Roy de Gomberville (who wrote some gigantic novels himself, as we'll see), though this appears to be an alternative sequel. Consequently, some scholars ignore the fifth volume entirely, though it does bring closure to the huge work.

3 My page count comes from this modern edition, not the 17th-century one, which ran to more than 5,500 pages. In fact, throughout this book, my page counts approximate modern book layouts (say 400 words per page), not the originals.

4 Gregorio's *Pastoral Masquerade* includes an 8-page appendix identifying all the characters in volumes 1–4, an invaluable census for the reader.

5 The book to read on this type, with special regard to this period, is Joan DeJean's *Libertine Strategies.*

6 As translated by Horowitz in her excellent, compact study *Honore d'Urfé* (115); Davies' translation (2B:27) isn't explicit enough.

7 In his essay "Form and Ideas in *L'Astrée*," Cherpack notes, "It is not surprising that the reader should find Celadon a Quixotic character, since the immortal Don was equally determined to observe Dulcinea's order, a similarity which [Maurice] Magendie ascribes to a common source (*Du nouveau sur L'Astrée* [1927], p. 132" (324 n9).

8 See Ovid's *Metamorphoses* (1:203) or, for the full story, Aratus's earlier *Phenomena* (ll. 98–136).

9 Hembree, *Subjectivity and the Signs of Love* (6)—a sophisticated analysis of *Astrea*'s place in this paradigm shift.

10 *Baroque Fiction-Making* , 62. Turk goes on to say Gomberville did this even better.

11 Furetière, *The Bourgeois Romance*, 163 (see 230–36 below).

12 Verdier, *Charles Sorel*, 17—my source for Sorel's early novels, which have never been translated into English.

13 Book 10 in Major Wright's 1655 translation of the 1633 edition of *Francion*, hereafter cited by book.

14 The term "antinovel" is universally credited to Jean-Paul Sartre, who used it to describe Nathalie Sarraute's 1948 novel *Portrait of a Man Unknown*. He makes no mention of Sorel.

15 Chap. 21 in Davies' 1653 translation, hereafter cited by chapter. Davies omits the book-length *Remarques* at the end of the original, but summarizes them in a lengthy, chapter-by-chapter introduction.

16 The first edition of the novel included this ludicrous engraving, which is reproduced on p. 164 of Hinds's *Narrative Transformations*. On the Web, one can find some colorized versions that are truly nauseating.

17 Clarimond is the author of a pastiche entitled "The Banquet of the Gods," reproduced in chapter 3, which (like Alberti's *Momus* and Barth's *Chimera*) portrays the gods behaving badly (i.e., like humans).

18 OuLiPo = Ouvroir de littérature potentielle, a group of mostly French writers founded in 1960 to explore new ways of generating fictions based on various rules and formal constraints.

19 *Privileged Mortals* is the title of an excellent monograph on this genre by Mark Bannister, which I will be citing often.

20 Gomberville's *Polexander*, 2.3.

21 Book 4, part 1 in William Browne's 1647 translation, which seems fairly complete but is merely "a pedestrian piece of work" according to Wadsworth (100).

22 Some earlier prototypes might be mentioned—the *Odyssey* for those who consider it a novel, Lucian's *True Story*, Arabian sea adventures like Sindbad's, the last two books of *Gargantua and Pantagruel*, Luo Maodeng's *Adventures in the Western Ocean*, et al.—but *Polexander* is the first nautical novel in the modern sense.

23 Sorel admired *Polexander*, even though it goes against his aesthetic. Gomberville wrote two other novels—the early pastoral *La Carithée* (1621) and another heroic novel called *Cythérée* (1640–42)—and left unfinished one on *La jeune Alcidiane* (1651).

24 *Les Historiettes*, as cited and translated by Levi, 392.

25 In historical fact, Statira was the wife of Darius, not his daughter. La Calprenède drew his story from the ancient writings of Plutarch, Justinus, and especially Quintus Curtius, the 1st-century Latin biographer of Alexander.

26 An abridged by translation by Sir Charles Cotterell of around 860 pages was published in 1652, and often reprinted, but it is unbearably verbose. I read the shorter (620 pages), anonymous, more readable translation published in 1703, cited by part/book.

27 Lazy La Calprenède stole one of these subplots, critics have detected, from a contemporary Italian novel entitled *Colloandro Fedele* (1652) by Giovanni Ambrogio Marini (Dunlop 2:420n2).

28 The name for a series of civil revolts against the monarchy that erupted between 1648 and 1653, led by aristocrats opposed to the oppressive policies of cardinals Richelieu and Mazarin. Women played an unprecedented role in the revolts; for this reason, Alexandre Dumas entitled his novel about the Fronde *The Women's War* (*La Guerre des femmes*, 1844).

29 If curious, though, see Pitou's old monograph on it; he argues that *Faramond* "is in some ways the most important of his contributions to French literature. It is not only the last *roman de longue haleine*, combining influences from the medieval *roman de chevalerie*, from French *salons*, and from contemporary theater, but it represents the epic

tradition in the attempt of the two authors . . . to celebrate the French monarchy as Virgil had celebrated the rulers of Rome" (9).

30 The adjectives are from Dugan's unconventional but richly informative "bioautography," *The Precious Lies of Madeleine de Scudéry*, 1:176.

31 The unpaginated preface occupies the first six pages of Henry Cogan's unabridged translation (1652); further citations will be by part/book.

32 Perhaps a misprint for "ease"; these early books are rife with typos.

33 Part 1, book 1 in the unabridged edition "Englished by F. G. Gent.," which was begun before the last of Scudéry's 10 volumes appeared, such was her popularity in England. (The subtitle on the title page reads *The Grand Cyrus*, but the running heads more correctly read *Cyrus the Great*.)

34 This particular story is available in a modern translation by Karen Newman as *The Story of Sapho*, the longest of the novel's interpolated tales, and will be cited by page numbers. ("Sapho" is the older French spelling of Sappho, and was Scudéry's salon nickname.)

35 From Aubrey de Sélincourt's translation *The Early History of Rome* (1960; NY: Penguin, 2002). Scudéry's other principal source was the *Roman Antiquities* of Dionysius of Halicarnassus, a Greek living and writing in Rome at the same time as Livy (early 1st cent. bce). Cloelia caught Scudéry's eye years earlier: she delivers a harangue on heroism in *Les Femmes illustres* (1642), which Madeleine wrote with her brother Georges.

36 *Roman Antiquities*, trans. Earnest Cary, Loeb Classical Library (London: Heinemann, 1940).

37 *Selected Criticism*, 27.

38 1.12 in the 1700 translation attributed to Tom Brown (hack writer and satiric poet), a Mr. Savage, and others, but largely based on the 1665 translation by "J. B.," probably John Bulteel. Unlike most of the translations from the French cited so far, this one is not bad.

39 Scarron died before he could complete the novel and his notes vanished, but he was obviously moving toward this conclusion; the anonymous ending supplied by the French publisher marries them off and, surprisingly, kills off ridiculous little Ragotin.

40 *Paul Scarron*, 75. See also the structural analysis in DeJean's excellent *Scarron's* Roman comique.

41 See Goldberg's *Art of* Joseph Andrews (43–53, 155–57) for an informative discussion of *The Comic Novel* and its influence on Fielding's novel.

42 Jean Paul Richter admired him. His appeal was rediscovered by French writers of the 19th century: Scarron appears in Dumas's *Twenty Years After* (1845), and after describing him in *Les Grotesques* (1844), Gautier essentially rewrote *The Comic Novel* as *Captain Fracasse* (1861–63). Even suicidal Gérard de Nerval acknowledged the influence of Scarron's novel on a few of his nerve-wracked novellas.

43 As this novel has never been translated in full—only some selections in the early 18th century that omit the crucial frame material—my discussion is based on Showalter (22–23), DeJean's *Tender Geographies* (52–55), and Donovan (118–19), plus what I could glean from the French original. The translated block quotation is from Beasley's *Revising Memory* (32).

44 His latest biographer, drawing upon recently discovered documents, suggests Cyrano died of complications from a head wound sustained when he was shot in an attempted assassination, evidently ordered by a representative of the Jesuits (Addyman, 243–47)

45 Page 25 in Strachan's 1965 translation of the complete work, hereafter cited parenthetically. Since then there have been attractive translations of part 1 by Donald Webb and Andrew Brown; the former is an online hypertext with copious commentary. Richard Aldington's earlier complete translation (1923) is more stylish than Strachan's but not as literal; however, it sports a fine introduction and useful notes and illustrations.

46 Strachan's edition, like Aldington's, follows the unreliable 1657 edition for these notes; my examples represent those in the original manuscript.

47 *Libertine Strategies*, 15. DeJean later dismisses Le Petit's novella *L'Heure du berger* (1662), playfully subtitled "*demy-roman comique ou roman demy-comique*" in homage to Scarron, as a "rather colorless, third-person pseudo *nouvelle espagnole*" (206). Ioan Williams, on the other hand, feels "it represents a significant step towards a straightforward treatment of contemporary experience outside the frame of comedy, and is quite unlike anything produced by more cautious contemporaries who died in their beds" (43).

48 English grammar mandates *that* or *which* instead of *who* when referring to animals, but this novel suggests they should likewise take the human relative pronoun.

49 For reasons of space, I decided not to pursue later examples of French imaginary voyages to utopias, for though their coded criticisms of current mores provide an invaluable record of countercultural dissent, their literary qualities, like those of most Neo-Latin utopias, seldom arise above those of generic adventure novels, and thus they may be more at home in a history of social theory. Two possible exceptions, both set in the recently discovered continent of Australia, that can be recommended are *The History of the Sevarambians* by Denis Veiras (or Vairasse, 1675) and *The Southern Land, Known* by Gabriel de Foigny (1676). Both are available in modern scholarly editions (see bibliography). Geoffroy Atkinson's two books on the extraordinary voyage in French literature (also in the bibliography) testify to the popularity of this genre.

50 As a result, what follows is based on discussions of the novel by Harth (*Cartesian Women*, 34–43), Jaouën, and Maher.

51 "In the strictest sense, it refers to the space between the bed and the wall of the bedroom. Guests visiting the hostess sat in this area" (Maher, 136n6).

52 This too has never been translated into English, so I'm relying on Alkon's analysis in *Origins of Futuristic Fiction* (17–44). He follows the tradition of ascribing the novel to Jacques Guttin, though recent critics are convinced it was written by de Pure.

53 Actually, the title page of the 1671 English translation reads "Scarron's *City Romance*," under the publisher's assumption it was a new translation of *Le Roman comique* or a sequel. This anonymous translation, annoyingly abridged somewhat, will be cited hereafter by page number.

54 A detail left out of the English translation, retrieved from Levi (312).

55 Also omitted from the English translation (grrr!), so adapted from Levi (312–13). I've converted the original's *livres* to dollars, @ 1 *livre* = $2.50.

56 A mere page after introducing Charroselles, the hypocritical narrator claims, "I dare not name any author that is alive . . . [nor do] as some

writers do who, speaking of them, only invert their names, hash or anagrammatize them" (87–88). Showalter suggests the narrator is not Furetière himself but " 'the Novelist,' a creature imagined by Furetière to be an object of ridicule" (114).

57 In their defense, most aristocrats married solely for economic and/or political reasons—women especially had little or no say in these alliances—and hence were almost *expected* to seek sex and/or love elsewhere.

58 Though most of the novel is as light as a soufflé, there are isolated instances of death, beheading, poisoning, stalking, domestic violence, divorce, and (as here) infanticide—all of which enhance the novel's realism.

59 The setup is similar to Chorier's Neo-Latin *Dialogues*, published a few years later, and a superior use of the form.

60 From the facing-page commentary in the edition I read (96), 20 percent of which is useful and the rest crazy-talk.

61 For a noncrazy account, see Hugh B. Urban's *Magia Sexualis: Sex, Magic, and Liberation in Modern Western Esotericism* (Berkeley: U California P, 2006).

62 The anecdote, along with the rest of the author's information on elemental beings, comes from Paracelsus's *Book on Nymphs, Sylphs, Pygmies, and Salamanders, and on the Other Spirits*, a fanciful pamphlet posthumously published in 1566, and available in *Four Treatises of Theophrastus von Hohenheim Called Paracelsus*, ed. Henry E. Sigerist (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 1941), 223–53.

63 An exception is the abbé de Saint-Réal (1639–92), who in 1672 added the subtitle "*nouvelle historique*" to his short novel *Don Carlos*, a highly romanticized though carefully documented account of the eldest son of Spain's Philip II. Engaged to Elizabeth of Valois, Carlos is deprived of her by his father, who decides to marry her himself after his own wife dies. Tension ensues. Suspecting his son of plotting against him, Philip has him imprisoned, and then orders his death, to which Carlos submits with great dignity. In fact, Carlos was an inbred, misshapen weirdo, but in Saint-Réal's hands he became a romantic hero who inspired plays by Otway and Schiller and an overheated opera by Verdi. Essentially a historian, Saint-Réal took advantage of the freedom of fiction to

whitewash the historical record rather than (as a true novelist would) use it as a springboard to explore character motivation and dramatize events to a greater extent than strict history allows. His *Don Carlos* is fraudulent; Saint-Réal lists his sources in the preface and cites them in marginal notes at various points in the narrative, but this is just an attempt to con the reader. "The objection," Geoffrey Bremner explains in "The Lesson of Saint-Réal," is that the author "put forward as truth what was to a large extent fiction" (356). It fails both as history and fiction, and thus deserves only a footnote in the history of the novel.

64 Page 161 in Cave's edition of *The Princess de Clèves*, where the novella occupies pp. 157–88. The publisher of the first French edition managed to spread it out over 142 pages.

65 Lafayette evidently also had the help of Jean de Segrais, who was credited as the author of *Zayde* (remember he was the beard for *Les Nouvelles françaises*), and of Pierre-Daniel Huet, whose *History of Romances* first appeared as the introduction to *Zayde*. As I said earlier, he concludes by praising Scudéry; of the novel he's introducing, Huet rhetorically asks the author "what success may you not presume upon from *Zayde*, where the adventures are so new and touching, and the narration so just and polite?" (148). That's it.

66 During the 1660s Villedieu also wrote several plays—an almost exclusively masculine genre until then—one of which was the first written by a woman to receive a command performance before the king.

67 The last word is *femelles* in the original, which, as Beasley notes (and from whom I've adapted the quotation), "is pejorative and is used primarily to refer to animals" (264 n5).

68 *Modernism*, 276. For Gay, Baudelaire is the first modernist; Lafayette is not mentioned in his magisterial work.

69 #402 in the Oxford edition of his *Collected Maxims*.

70 From her book *Ideology and Culture in Seventeenth Century France* (1983), as excerpted in the Norton Critical Edition of *The Princess of Clèves*, 231 (and hereafter abbreviated NCE). I will be citing Terence Cave's translation, widely considered the best, but the NCE appends a valuable section of critical essays.

71 Patrick Henry's introduction to *An Inimitable Example*, 2—an excellent collection of essays on *The Princess.* Regarding the similar confession

in Villedieu's *Disorders of Love*, her translator points out that "Mme de Termes is a devastated woman whose confession, unlike that of Mme de Clèves, has no heroic implications" (3). There was no "domestic repose" to maintain in Villedieu's case.

72 Translated excerpts from these two books—Jean-Baptiste-Henri de Valincour's *Lettres à Madame la marquise *** sur le sujet de la* Princesse de Clèves and Jean-Antoine de Charnes's *Conversations sur la critique de la* Princesse de Clèves (which some attribute to Lafayette herself)—can be found in NCE (123–36) and in Beasley and Jensen's *Approaches to Teaching Lafayette's* The Princess of Clèves (183–91), another excellent collection of essays.

73 Where have I heard that before? Oh yeah, from reviewers every time a "difficult" novel is published.

74 Perrault had a hand in writing a different kind of fairy tale; if bi-curious, see *The Story of the Marquise-Marquis de Banneville* (1696), a lightweight novella about a girl raised as a boy who marries a boy raised as a girl. Its principal author is the abbé of Choisy (1644–1724), a transvestite churchman and historian, and one of the characters, the Countess d'Aletraf, is said to have been based on Mme de Lafayette.

75 For an informative essay on *Hypolitus*, see chap. 5 of Duggan's *Salonnières, Furies, and Fairies*.

76 Again to give Fénelon his due, France was in a mess in the 1690s—there was widespread famine despite the widespread availability of uncultivated land—and implementation of his agrarian reforms, along with some of his political reforms, would have changed the course of French history.

77 Pages 216–17 in Riley's edition; as he explains in his introduction (xxxii), he basically follows Tobias Smollett's 1776 translation; an excellent critical edition of the latter was published as part of Smollett's complete works in 1997. (Riley's version, like the French original, is in 18 books, whereas Smollett divided it into 24 books, like the *Odyssey*.)

78 Cf. the dismissal of territorial conflicts in Voltaire's *Micromegas*: " 'It is all for the sake of a few mud-heaps,' replied the philosopher, 'no bigger than your heel. Not that any of the millions who are cutting each other's throats lay claim to the least particle of these heaps' " (chap. 7, trans. Cuffe).

79 A Jansenist named Faydit in *La Télémacomanie* (1700), as quoted in Davis's *Fénelon*, 108.

80 Clark, 232, which remains after nearly a century the only book-length study in English of this fascinating writer. On the other hand, it's so good that there's no pressing need for another.

81 Page 456 in *Fairy Tales and Romances*, where *The Ram* occupies pp. 445–543. Hamilton's tales were not published until 1730, and translated into English in 1760.

82 This became a French proverb: "Bélier, mon ami, . . . si tu voulais bien commencer par le commencement, tu me ferais plaisir."

83 Page 367 in *Fairy Tales and Romances*, where *The History of Mayflower* occupies pp. 366–444.

84 Page 108 in *Fairy Tales and Romances*, where it occupies pp. 1–108. This edition includes two sequels, one written by the translator of part 1, Matthew Lewis (109–215), and another by the Duc de Levis (218–76). Saintsbury says "they are, after the fashion of such things, very little good" (313n2), so I didn't bother reading them; by this point my battered Victorian omnibus was falling apart anyway.

85 Page 376 in this well-annotated edition; the *Memoirs* itself will be cited by chapter. (In some books the chevalier's name is spelled Grammont, but Gramont is the correct form.)

86 One prominent English historian, in her biography of Charles II, actually lists the *Memoirs* in her bibliography under Gramont, as though Hamilton were merely his amanuensis. The American Library of Congress, following the Brits, catalogs it as British history, not as French literature.

87 Chapter 3 in Thomas's 1841 translation (of the expanded edition of 1726), hereafter cited by chapter. Although not entirely satisfactory, it is more accurate than the earlier two: one by Tobias Smollett (1750, rev. 1759), which is available in a modern critical edition, and the first English translation, published by Jacob Tonson in 1708 (expanded ed. 1729). The overly creative translator of that one actually inserted a chapter of his own in imitation of Lesage, which was retained when William Strange lightly revised the translation in 1841. (The spurious chapter is entitled "The Lovers" and persists in some reprints.)

88 See Béatrice Didier's recent critical edition of the French original for details.

89 *American Notes for General Circulation* (1842), quoted in Mancini's "Demons on the Rooftops, Gypsies in the Streets," 114, to which I am indebted for both Dickens references.

90 "Introductory Notice," xii; in 1898, two years after Van Laun died, a new edition was issued "revised and completed by Henri Roberts." I'll be citing a later edition of that version, by book and chapter except for editorial matter. The ubiquitous Smollett translated this Lesage novel as well (1748), which, like his *Devil upon Crutches*, is available in a splendid critical edition from the University of Georgia Press.

91 Lesage translated/adapted/composed nearly a hundred plays and knew the milieu well; he used *Gil Blas* to vent a lifetime's complaints about actors, critics, audiences, and other playwrights, including a young Voltaire under the name Gabriel Triaquero (10.5). For details, see Stewart's *Rereadings* (108–12) and Cook's *Lesage* (52–54).

92 I learned of it from the essay on "Books" included in some editions of Voltaire's *Philosophical Dictionary*. Voltaire based his novella *Micromegas* on a later science fiction novel by Bordelon entitled *Gongam, l'homme prodigeux transporté dans l'air, sur la terre et sous les eaux* (1711), which seems to be equally unknown to the historians of that genre.

93 The anonymous translation of 1711 (hereafter cited by page number) sticks very closely to the French original, even correcting a few of Bordelon's learned citations, but unfortunately, a third of the way through, the printer accidentally dropped about 25 pages of material, most of chapters 16 and 17.

94 "Judicial" astrology referred to the fortune-telling sort, condemned by the Church, as opposed to medical and meteorological predictions, which were acceptable.

95 It's not always clear when Bordelon is quoting or paraphrasing, so I've punctuated these footnotes tentatively and clarified a few bibliographic details (as I've done with the list of books on the next page).

96 I believe this is the first novel to have an index. Later novels with indexes include Samuel Richardson's *Sir Charles Grandison*, Lewis Carroll's *Sylvie and Bruno*, George Gissing's *Private Papers of Henry*

Ryecroft, Juan Perucho's *Natural History*, Virginia Woolf's *Orlando*, Ethel Mannin's *Women Also Dream*, Vladimir Nabokov's *Pale Fire*, John Updike's *Centaur*, Harry Mathews's *Sinking of the Odradek Stadium*, Georges Perec's *Life A User's Manual*, Kurt Vonnegut's *Jailbird*, Alasdair Gray's *Lanark* ("Index of Plagiarisms"), Italo Calvino's *Mr. Palomar*, Wolfgang Hildesheimer's *Marbot*, Julián Ríos's *Larva* and *Poundemonium*, Clive James's *Brilliant Creatures*, Malcolm Bradbury's *My Strange Quest for Mensonge*, Lucy Ellmann's *Sweet Desserts*, Jacques Roubaud's *Princess Hoppy* and *The Loop*, Milorad Pavić's *Landscape Painted with Tea*, Jostein Gaarder's *Sophie's World*, Alain de Botton's *Kiss and Tell*, Suzanne Cleminshaw's *Great Ideas*, Mark Z. Danielewski's *House of Leaves*, Anders Monson's *Other Electricities*, Lawrence Shainberg's *Crust*, Jeremy Davies's *Rose Alley*, and Patricia Marx's *Starting from Happy*.

97 "Witchcraft Prosecutions and the Decline of Magic," *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 40.2 (Autumn 2009), 263—a useful background essay that happens to mention *Monsieur Oufle* in passing (282).

98 The name is sometimes spelled Challes or Chasles. Just as Lesage trained for writing fiction by translating Avellaneda's spurious sequel to *Don Quixote* into French (1704), Challe prepped by writing a continuation of François Filleau de Saint-Martin's sequel to his French translation of *Don Quixote*.

99 The novel was originally published as *Les Illustres françoises*, but most critics today refer to it in the feminine. The English title I've been using is that of Penelope Aubin; Ann Preston's recent translation has the hokey title *Life, Love and Laughter in the Reign of Louis XIV* (which will be cited by page number). Like Aubin, she omits Challe's preface without explanation.

100 Des Frans arrives on Sunday, hears the first story on Tuesday, the second on Wednesday, the next three on Thursday, tells his own story on Friday, and hears the long seventh story on Saturday.

101 ". . . aux moins ceux de Francion," an important literary allusion that Preston obscures by translating it as "My escapades were like something out of a picaresque novel" (441).

102 On its wealth of realistic details, see the long chapter on Challe's novel in Showalter's *Evolution of the French Novel*, especially pp. 224–35, and Stewart's *Imitation and Illusion*, 162–63.

103 In Betts's translation, hereafter cited by letter number except for appendices and editorial matter.

104 The subject continued to fascinate Montesquieu, resulting in his massive study *The Spirit of Laws* (1748), which had a major influence on the authors of the U.S. Constitution.

105 These juxtapositions are apparently what Montesquieu meant when he claimed there is a "secret chain" connecting the disparate letters together; see Runyan's *Art of the* Persian Letters (specifically pp. 18–19 on the Jansenist example) for the lexical links in Montesquieu's chain.

106 It has remained popular over the centuries. Mariane cherishes it in Nicolai's *Sebaldus Nothanker* (3.5).

107 Both quoted remarks are from Goldsmith's *Exclusive Conversations*, 143, 151.

108 Letter 6, in Haywood's translation. The French original doesn't use all those dashes and italics but is just as choppy. Among Boursault's other novels is a comic Spanish romance entitled *Seeing and Believing Are Two Things* (*Ne pas croire ce qu'on voir*, 1670), which I read a little of; it's notable only for being the first French novel to use a colorful phrase for a title.

109 Its publication history is mysterious: after the first French volume appeared, seven more volumes appeared *in English* from 1691 to 1694. The jury's still out on whether these were translated from Marana's manuscript or invented by his English publisher. For more on *The Turkish Spy* and its similarity to *Persian Letters*, see Ballaster's *Fabulous Orients*, 145–62. Among Defoe's many works is *A Continuation of the Turkish Spy* (1718).

110 Greene's *Marivaux*, 18—the best book on him in English.

111 For a discussion of Marivaux's nuanced and innovative use of spoken language in his novels, see the chapter on him in Mylne; she concludes: "Marivaux was more keenly aware than any previous French novelist of the value of words, both for indicating external distinctions of class and education, and for suggesting permanent traits of personality or changing emotive attitudes. Because he utilizes a wider range of

linguistic usage, and because he is skilled in choosing the crucial revelatory phrase, his picture of society has a new depth and precision. It is as though, by his exploration of the resources of speech, he had discovered how to suggest a new dimension in portrayal, never fully mastered by previous novelists" (113).

112 Volume 1, pp. 4, 7, in Lockman's pleasant if antiquated translation (1750). He Anglicized the characters' names and transported the setting to a London suburb, but otherwise seems to have stuck close to the original. But I'd give anything for a modern, faithful translation.

113 See Booth (370–75) for Marivaux's key role in this tradition. Sterne owned a copy of the English translation of *Pharsamond*.

114 Dismissing this claim, Hodgson feels Marivaux inserted the two novellas "to illustrate the disastrous effects of interpolated stories which are not integral parts of the structure of the novel" (345); that is, Marivaux sabotaged his own novel just to score another point against the *roman héroïque*.

115 The English edition accidentally omits the bracketed word; original reads: "ce ne sont point les choses qui sont le mal d'un récit."

116 *Palimpsests*, 149. Genette goes on to discuss Marivaux's *Télémaque travesti* (153–56) in such a tantalizing way to make me regret further its unavailability in English.

117 Miller, *The Heroine's Text*, 25.

118 Vol. 1, pp. 60–61 in the early translation (1736–42) attributed to John Lockman, the translator of *Pharsamond*. This is a more literal translation than the popular one by Mary Mitchell Collyer, retitled *The Virtuous Orphan* (1742), which bowdlerizes the text—she censors the striptease above and the one I quote next—pumps up the piety and sentimentality, and takes other liberties with the text. (She includes her own sequel as well, whereas Lockman stops where Marivaux stops.) Nonetheless, Collyer's is more accessible than Lockman's—there's an excellent annotated edition of the Collyer translation from 1965—and generally reads better than Lockman's, so I reluctantly cite her version (by page) and his only for the parts she omits (by volume/page). It's an outrage that such an important novel isn't available in a modern translation.

119 As noted earlier, convents then were like women's hotels, or the YWCA; unwanted daughters and distressed ladies stayed there without

actually taking vows.

120 Marivaux put this more bluntly in *Pharsamond*, where the narrator wryly notes "the prodigious number of crazy people in the world" (2:275).

121 Because there isn't a complete English translation of the novel, I have to resort to a tag-team of translators: the anonymous, somewhat abridged 1738 one of books 1–6, Robertson's unabridged translation of the first half of book 5 (set in England), and Waddell's translation of the original version of book 7. Citations will be to book/page numbers.

122 While in Italy, portrayed as a land of magic and superstition, Renoncour excavates an ancient subterranean cavern devoted to the Three Furies. With its Latin inscription, frightening statues, and coffins filled with putrefied human remains, it's a scene straight out of a Gothic horror novel of the 1790s.

123 *The Art of Poetry*, ll. 343–44 in Fairclough's translation (p. 479).

124 The original 1731 edition was simply book 7 of *the Man of Quality*; Prévost gave it the above title when he published a revised, toned-down edition in 1753, but nowadays the novel is misleadingly called *Manon Lescaut*—it's Des Grieux's story, not hers. Current translations are based on the 1753 text, which is more sympathetic to Manon, but I'll be citing Waddell's translation of the 1731 edition because it represents the author's initial conception of the character and is more aesthetically consistent with the rest of the *Man of Quality*.

125 The fact Manon betrays Des Grieux with a tax-collector caps the rising disgust with nouveau-riche financiers that runs through the *Man of Quality*. Near the end, Renoncour notes the financial crises caused by bourgeoise speculators and, boldly anticipating Freud's identification of money with excrement, reports that an abbe told him the late treasurer general of war had an appetite "as vile and corrupt as his mind, for he assured us his favorite dish was human excrement, which he purchased at any rate from the first healthy person he met in the streets whom he judged poor enough to make the bargain. He added that for this purpose he always carried a gold spoon in his pocket" (6/2:161).

126 Regarding the father's death, the revised edition of 1753 adds: "to which I fear, with only too much cause, my errors have contributed" (trans. Scholar, 146).

127 This elicits the only arresting thing Manon ever says: she thought nothing of sending him a sexual surrogate "for the fidelity I want from you is the fidelity of the heart" (177), not of the body, which explains why she is so free with hers.

128 Quoted in Scholar's excellent introduction, xxviii. And just to be clear, Manon is contemptible not because she's a whore—I support the legalization of prostitution—but because she's a lying, thieving, conniving, insensitive one, unlike Dumas's Marguerite Gautier.

129 This is one of the many ways in which Cleveland anticipates suicidal, Romantic types like Rousseau's St. Preux and Goethe's Werther. For more on this aspect, see Woodbridge's "Romantic Tendencies in the Novels of the Abbé Prévost."

130 Page 567 in *The Libertine Reader* (where the novel occupies pp. 553–717), a luxurious anthology I'll be using for several subsequent novels, and (I'm guessing) a provocative book to be seen reading in a university-area bistro.

131 Preceding letter 29, hereafter cited by letter.

132 That is, she's been betrayed before, just as the Christian Rinaldo rejected the love of Armida, the powerful witch-queen of Damascus.

133 Both quotations are from book 4, chapter 9 of the anonymous 1735 translation, hereafter cited by book/chapter.

134 Given the novel's Japanese setting, it's fun to note that, according to William T. Vollmann, the Noh term *sarugaki* "can mean either 'monkey' or 'god,' depending on the pronunciation" (*Kissing the Mask*, 66).

135 Page 768 in Feher's *Libertine Reader*, where the novel occupies pp. 767–910, preceded by an insightful introduction by Catherine Cusset.

136 Later Versac says "to be really well bred a man should have a mind that is ornate but not pedantic, elegant without affectation, gay without being vulgar, and easy without being indecent" (889).

137 Conroy (133n10) cites several passages from Will and Ariel Durant's *Age of Voltaire* (1965) that confirm the accuracy of Crébillon's picture.

138 The quotation is from p. 29 of Eric Sutton's 1925 translation. Marketed as erotica, it has been reprinted under the titles *A Lady of Quality* (1928) and, in a sleazy bid for attention, *Sextravaganza* (1932).

139 The *nom de roman*, you'll recall, of the book-mad heroine of Marivaux's *Pharsamond*, which was finally published the year Crébillon

wrote this novel.

140 But it's Clitandre, not the editor, who provides the novel's most metafictional comment: denying Cidalise's request for the story of Julie, Clitandre protests "this would be the most singularly inappropriate moment for such a story. . . . So much so, that if our adventure of this night were written down and if, at the present juncture, any question of this story arose, no one would hesitate to omit it, however promising it might appear" (85).

141 Page 37 in Wilfrid Jackson's rather fusty translation, which occupies pp. 13–103 in her anthology *Three Stories of the French Eighteenth Century* (1927). It would be wonderful to have Crébillon's two dialogue-novels newly translated and published together, perhaps under the Firbankian title *Inclinations*.

142 *Enlightenment and the Shadows of Chance*, 212–13. Kavanagh's long chapter on Crébillon is well worth seeking out.

143 "Preface" in Bonamy Dobrée's 1927 translation, reprinted in Feher's *Libertine Reader* (pp. 178–331), hereafter cited by chapter number.

144 Of all the pop songs with that title, I'd recommend the sugar-rushing one by Talulah Gosh (1988).

145 This too is something Crébillon had done before: in *The Skimmer*, Tanzaï and Néardarné debate literary techniques during the Marivaux parody.

146 An *authorized* collaboration that, alas, never appeared was suggested by one of Crébillon's English admirers. In a 1762 letter to Garrick, Laurence Sterne wrote: "Crebillon has made a convention with me, which, if he is not too lazy, will be no bad *persiflage*—as soon as I get to Thoulouse he has agreed to write me an expostulatory letter upon the indecorums of T. Shandy—which is to be answered by recrimination upon the liberties of his own works—these are to be printed together—Crebillon against Sterne—Sterne against Crebillon—the copy to be sold, and the money to be equally divided" (1:252).

147 Chap. 2, hereafter cited by chapter. This anonymous 18th-century translation is quite fluent, but the translator misses the point by translating the country of *Romancie* as "Arcadia"; "Novel-Land" is the preferable rendering of Margaret Anne Doody, who devotes a page to *Prince Fan-Feredin* (284). The country has a two-page entry (under

"Romancia") in Manguel and Guadalupi's *Dictionary of Imaginary Places*.

148 He is especially critical of the writings of Thomas-Simon Gueullette (1683–1766), who wrote such things as *Breton Evenings: New Fairy Tales* (1712), *Tartar Tales, or A Thousand and One Quarters of Hours* (1715), *The Wonderful Adventures of the Mandarin Fum-Hoam* (1723), *Mogul Tales* (1725), and *Peruvian Tales, Related in One Thousand and One Hours* (1733). I haven't read any of them (though they're available in 18th-century translations), but they sound fun; a serious literary scholar, Gueullette also edited the works of Rabelais and Montaigne, among others. For more on him, see Ballaster's *Fabulous Orients*.

149 Both have lengthy entries in *The Dictionary of Imaginary Places*, and a portion of Alan Moore's graphic novel series *The League of Extraordinary Gentlemen* is set in Amphicléocles.

150 After Marivaux published *Le Paysan parvenu*, Mouhy wrote *La Paysanne parvenue* (1735); he likewise switched the sexual and textual orientation of Prévost's *Memoirs of a Man of Quality Who Has Withdrawn from the World* with his *Memoirs of a Girl of Quality Who* Hasn't *Withdrawn from the World* (1747). Mouhy's name crops up in novels by Voltaire (*The Princess of Babylon*) and Diderot (*The Indiscreet Jewels*). See Fitting's informative essay for more on the career of this minor writer.

151 Of the 344 authors in Jones's *List of French Prose Fiction, from 1700 to* 1750, only 43 are women (12.5 percent), though a few of the anonymous novels he lists were undoubtedly written by them. Tencin wrote a few other novels, one translated with the promising title *The Female Adventurers* (*Les Malheurs de l'amour*, 1747), which I was not able to locate.

152 Page 4 in Parmée's one-volume edition of both novels, where *Madame de Luz* occupies pp. 3–80. Reviewers praised the translator's accuracy, but the book was negligently copy-edited and proofread.

153 Page 28 in the 1925 translation by H. B. V.—that is, Vyvyan Beresford Holland, Oscar Wilde's son.

154 Letter 3 in Mallinson's translation, hereafter cited by letter. This recent edition adds many supplementary materials, including passages from

from Garcilaso de la Vega's book and selections from some of the sequels others wrote (including one by *Lamékis* author Mouhy).

155 The early letters are "written" in *khipu*, a system of knotted fibers I described in my previous volume (398). Later Zilia translates them into French to join those written in her adopted language. Miller has a perceptive chapter on this aspect of Graffigny's novel in her *Subject to Change*, 125–61.

156 Pages 7–8 in Smith's fine translation. I'm surprised Feher didn't include this short novel in his *Libertine Reader*; it's certainly more fitting than Prévost's *Story of a Modern Greek Woman*.

157 On two occasions his characters refer to Gervaise de Latouche's "awful" *Histoire de Dom Bougre, portier des Chartreux* (1741) to imply a distinction between d'Argens's novel and that anticlerical porno. In the spirit of scholarly thoroughness, I read a little of an old English translation and it is indeed pretty awful, just one clichéd sex scene after another.

158 "An Essay on Novels," in *The Crimes of Love*, 10.

159 See Brumfield's informative essay listed in the bibliography.

160 *Zadig*, COS 122; since there isn't a one-volume edition of Voltaire's complete fiction in English (and why not?! It would only be about 700 pages long), I'll be citing various translations by these abbreviations: C=Cuffe's *Candide*; COS=Pearson's *Candide and Other Stories*; CT=Walton's *Complete Tales*; M=Cuffe's *Micromégas and Other Short Fictions*.

161 Pearson, *Fables of Reason*, 4. This is the best book in English on Voltaire's fiction.

162 Pearson: "It went through at least ten editions within the first year and on 24 September [1768] was condemned and ordered to be burned by the Paris Parlement, who also sentenced two booksellers to three days in the pillory and subsequent despatch to the galleys for having had the audacity to purvey it. The Vatican authorities finally placed it on their Index of forbidden works on 29 November 1771. For one of Voltaire's books, therefore, a fairly standard launch" (20).

163 Many of the English names are oddly one letter off—Birton, Mountjouy, Primerose, Wirburton—though Freind is based on the brothers John and Robert Freind, a physician (1675–1728) and an

Anglican clergyman, respectively. "Jenni" is a Frenchman's phonetic rendering of "Johnny," and Birton "was a character somewhat in the style of that of the late Earl [of] Rochester" (CT 1:143), the rakish Restoration poet.

164 Voltaire's motto *Écrasez l'infâme* comes from a line in a 1762 letter to Jean le Ronde d'Alembert that can be translated "Whatever you do, *trample down abuses*, and love those who love you." D'Alembert, by the way, was the illegitimate child of la Tencin, who abandoned him at birth; he is also the protagonist of Diderot's dialogue-novel *D'Alembert's Dream.*

165 It should go without saying that religion is not synonymous with morality, which Voltaire championed. By "religion" he meant dogma, ritual, priestcraft, biblical literalism, sectarian violence, and intolerance for other religions. Though Catholicism was his main target, Voltaire included *all* religions under the category of institutionalized superstition.

166 The first version of *Micromegas* was written in 1738–39 as *Voyage du baron de Gangan*, partly inspired by Bordelon's *Gongam* (see p. 275n92 above), partly by Swift's *Gulliver's Travels*, which Voltaire read upon publication in 1726 and greatly admired. The early version disappeared after he sent it to King Frederick II of Prussia.

167 These eccentric works may also have been encouraged by *Tristram Shandy*, which Voltaire began reading shortly after publication in 1759 and pronounced "a very unaccountable book; an original one" (letter dated September 1760, written partly in English).

168 After studying astronomy, Zadig "saw men then for what they really are, insects devouring each other upon a tiny speck of dirt" (COS 151). Cf. the Earthling's explanation of warfare to Micromegas: "It is all for the sake of a few mud-heaps . . . no bigger than your heel" (M 32).

169 Voltaire makes the same point in *The Man with Forty Crowns* when a character complains "that a hundred women read the *Arabian Nights* to one that reads two chapters of Locke" (1:317). John Locke's *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1690) was one of Voltaire's favorite books and is alluded to several times in his novellas.

170 The Lisbon earthquake of 1 November 1755, about which Voltaire also wrote a poem, had a catastrophic effect on the European intelligentsia's belief in a god: what kind of "loving" god would destroy the just with

the unjust in such a callous manner?—the same question Jews asked two centuries later after the Holocaust.

171 Calvino, 175–76. This marvelous essay originated as the preface to an Italian edition of *Candide* (1974).

172 He edited and contributed to the grand *Encyclopédie* (1751–72, 28 vols.), the Enlightenment's massive public works program to end the great depression that set in at the beginning of the Christian Dark Ages. Voltaire was an early contributor, but objected to its interminable length and high cost; he wrote his *Philosophical Dictionary* (1764) partly as a compact alternative.

173 "Eulogy of Richardson," *Selected Writings*, 108.

174 Chap. 7 in Hawkes's translation, hereafter cited by chapter. (It can also be found in Feher's *Libertine Reader*, 344–541.) Diderot's immediate source of inspiration was apparently *Nocrion, conte allobroge* (1747), a novelette by the Count de Caylus in which a fairy gives a knight the power to make vulvae speak, but the *pudenda loquens* is a folk-motif that can be traced at least as far back as Garin's 13th-century *Le Chevalier qui faisait parler les cons*, a verse-tale about a knight "who had a truly remarkable talent,/ for he could make cunts speak, this gallant,/and conjure arseholes from all parts/to answer his summons by magic arts." (An English translation can be found in Hellman and O'Gorman's *Fabliaux*, 105–21.) The concept hasn't lost its appeal over the ages: see (or hear) the "talking asshole" in Burroughs's *Naked Lunch*, and/or the "cunt auction" in Coover's *Lucky Pierre*.

175 See his essay "On Women" (*Selected Writings*, 309–17), but he was sympathetic to their plight: "In almost all countries, the civil laws have merely served to reinforce nature's original cruelty to women: they have been treated like imbecile children" (314).

176 Introduction to Hawkes's translation, ix–x (reprinted from a 1979 essay). Rather than pursue this thesis, Vartanian spends the rest of the essay unlocking the historical elements of this *roman à clef*, where the king and his mistress transparently portray King Louis XV and Mme de Pompadour.

177 Jacques Proust, as quoted in Wilson's *Diderot*, 387. (Wilson also notes that Diderot had a younger sister who went insane in an Ursuline convent.) In 1760 some convents were still staging mock crucifixions in

which nuns were nailed to a cross for hours at a time: see Furbank's *Diderot*, 210. These two are the standard biographies; Furbank's is less detailed but more insightful in its literary analysis.

178 In his *Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis*, Freud writes: "the two criminal wishes of the Oedipus complex were recognised as the true representatives of the uninhibited life of the instincts long before the time of psychoanalysis. Among the writings of the Encyclopaedist Diderot you will find a celebrated dialogue, *Le Neveu de Rameau*, which was rendered into German by no less a person than Goethe. There you may read this remarkable sentence: 'If the little brute were left to his own devices, and remained in all his ignorance, combining the undeveloped mind of a child in its cradle with the violent passions of a man of thirty, he would wring his father's throat and go to bed with his mother' " (quoted by Furbank, xi).

179 Page 79 in *This Is Not a Story and Other Stories*, where the novella occupies pp. 60–112.

180 Two hundred and thirty years later, David Markson would publish a novel entitled *This Is Not a Novel* that contains this two-line sequence: "*Ceci n'est pas un conte.* Diderot, 1772. [¶] *Ceci n'est pas une pipe*. Magritte, 1929" (138).

181 As with his other novels, a version of this appeared in an extremely limited-edition magazine called *Correspondance littéraire*, but not in book form until 1796.

182 Some critics believe this ending is the "true" one, but I side with those (like Nicholls, 82–83) who feel the improbable happy ending is a phony alternative.

183 A chapter title in Italo Calvino's *If on a winter's night a traveler*, a novel very much in the spirit of (if not directly influenced by) *Jacques the Fatalist*.

184 *Le Compère Mathieu* (Godfather Matthew, 1766) is a freewheeling, gratuitously erudite libertine novel by Henri-Joseph Du Laurens that unfortunately has never been translated into English. In a 1970 essay describing the relationship between it and *Jacques*, Cherpack argues that Diderot is being self-deprecating in citing this superficially similar but artistically inferior work.

185 I'm thinking of Jack Gibbs's constantly interrupted efforts to write his book and Gaddis's career-long obsession with *Rameau's Nephew*'s theme of failure and genius, not to mention his preference for dialogic form. Gibbs refers to Diderot in the context of his encyclopedic ambitions (588).

186 "Conversation about Novels," aka the second preface to *Julie*, 14. Prefatory and editorial matter will be cited by page number, but the novel by book/letter number.

187 Geoffrey Bremner, "Rousseau's Realism or a Close Look at Julie's Underwear" (1982), which is worth taking a look at—Bremner's essay, that is, not her undies. He's referring to a scene where St. Preux hides in Julie's dressing room and drools over her discarded clothes, especially her corset (1.54).

188 Jackson makes the case for Diderot in chap. 3 of her book *Rousseau's Occasional Autobiographies*. In early 1757 Rousseau sent Diderot the first two parts of *Julie*, which six months later he still hadn't read, so "Diderot agreed to let Rousseau read aloud to him from *Julie*, but complained afterward that he droned on 'pitilessly' from ten in the morning until eleven at night, allowing no interruptions even for meals, so that when he finished there was no time left to listen to anything by Diderot in return. All Rousseau says in the *Confessions* is that Diderot called the manuscript *feuillu*, 'leafy,' a term he apparent invented on the spot. (Rousseau understood it to mean 'redundant' and admitted that it was accurate)" (Damrosch, 293–94). Their friendship ended shortly afterward.

189 Not always true: Rousseau wrote and then discarded a long autobiographical letter by the English lord—he called it "too novelistic to be combined with Julie's [adventures] without spoiling their simplicity" (613)—but let stand later references to its details in the surviving letters.

190 In *The Man with Forty Crowns*, Voltaire mocks Rousseau for criticizing "romances at the same time that he is making romances in which the hero is a stupid preceptor who receives charity from a Swiss girl whom he has got with child, and who goes to spend her money in a brothel in Paris; let us leave him to his opinion that he has surpassed Fénelon and

Xenophon, in educating a young man of quality in the trade of a joiner" (CT 1:292).

191 From Ruth Thomas's essay on Riccoboni in *French Women Writers*, 357—a reference book I've consulted often for this chapter.

192 Restif de la Bretonne, *Lucile*, chap. 15.

193 The narrator merely paraphrases a letter the master has received, then notices: "Reader, you've stopped reading. What's the matter? Ah! I think I have it! You want to see the letter! Madame Riccoboni would not have failed to show it to you" (205).

194 I was reminded of an episode of *Queer Eye for the Straight Guy* (c. 2003) in which a hipster was so overwhelmed by the makeover of his bachelor pad that he blurted out, "I want to fuck this room!"

195 Vol. 2, p. 105 in Dr. Hooper's contemporary translation. Since he saw no reason for the date, he retitled his translation *Memoirs of the Year 2500*, even though the reason is stated in the first chapter: the dreamer (like Mercier) was born in 1740, so he chose a date 700 years into the future. The only other English translation, done in 1797, gets the year right but entitles the book *Astræa's Return*; and though it incorporates Mercier's later additions, it eliminates all his footnotes! Darnton translates selections from *2440* in his *Forbidden Best-Sellers* (300–36).

196 A novel with a "moral purpose," says Saintsbury: "endless talk about virtue and the affections and justice and all the rest of it" (413–14). Pass.

197 "He was a rapid swallow that glanced with grace and ease along the surface of a large river, where he drank and dipped his wings as he skimmed along," the librarian feels, seconded in a footnote by the author, who prefers a different animal: "Behold Voltaire, who, like a stag, bounds over the plains of literature" (2:26, 27n).

198 Tzvetan Todorov uses *The Devil in Love* to theorize this genre in *The Fantastic: A Structural Approach to a Literary Genre* (1970). But in his recent book *Before Fiction*, Nicholas Paige argues that Cazotte's novel "is structurally almost the inversion of the fantastic, since it starts with the supernatural and then asks whether the supernatural has become part of the natural world" (184).

199 These adventures occur in what Lesuire calls both Austral France and Antarctic France (a short-lived colony in the Bay of Rio de Janeiro), the

latter taken from a passage in Montaigne's great essay "On Cannibals" that Lesuire cites (3:32).

200 Casanova was of course Italian, but the novel is discussed here because he wrote it in French and published it under the name Jacques Casanova de Seingalt. The original consists of five volumes totaling 1,745 pages, which would occupy around 800 pages in a modern setting. The only English translation available, which I'll be citing by page number, reduces it to a quarter of its original length.

201 Translator Zurer says she cut Casanova's "whole commentary on Genesis in which he finds justification for the union of brother and sister" and his "long-winded" lectures on "the nature of light and its relation to color; he expostulates on optics and cataract removal; he discourses on theology and religion. . . . When he describes the theaters he is building or the city he is planning, he details every single measurement," and she "eliminated sentences, phrases and words that were repetitious or trivial or unnecessarily detailed" (6).

202 From Baldick's introduction to his abridged translation of *Monsieur Nicolas*, 4. A complete translation in six volumes was published in 1930–31.

203 Porter, 2. He explains that most of Restif's books are so autobiographical that it's often difficult to distinguish his fiction from his memoirs and journalism.

204 He abridges the 1,700-page novel to a mere 218 pages, but assures us he retained "all the erotic episodes" (xxv); hereafter cited by page.

205 Page 7 in Wainhouse's translation, the unsuitably titled *Pleasures and Follies of a Good-Natured Libertine*. As an insulting joke, Restif ascribed the novel to Jean-Pierre Linguet, a historian who had been guillotined a few years earlier.

206 *Letters from Prison*, 333–34. The next quotation is from *The Crimes of Love*, 13.

207 Quoted by Constantine in the introduction to her translation (xxiii), hereafter cited by letter number.

208 Feher's introduction to *Dangerous Liaisons* in *The Libertine Reader*, 917.

209 There's even a minor character named Vressac, a fellow libertine with whom Valmont dallies as gaily as Merteuil does with gamesome Cécile.

210 Laclos may have had in mind Marie Riccoboni's novels, which he knew well: he even wrote a libretto for an opera based on her *Ernestine*. Immediately after *Dangerous Liaisons* appeared, Riccoboni wrote him to complain about it, arguing that women like Merteuil don't exist (!), leading to a heated exchange of letters; see chap. 3 of Sol's *Textual Promiscuities* for the full story and plenty of juicy quotations.

211 Roseann Runte pursues the idea of Laclos's characters as "self-conscious authors" in Free's collection of essays on *Dangerous Liaisons* (123–36).

212 Page 21 in *The Nobleman and Other Romances*, where the novella occupies pp. 1–22.

213 Blurb on back cover of the Stewart-Vaché translation, hereafter cited by page number. The novelette is also included in *The Nobleman and Other Romances*, 75–101.

214 In an interesting essay, Susan Jackson suggests Charrière avoided closure in most of her novels to dramatize the adage "a woman's work is never done." Men's writing (among other activities) finishes after a climax, but what French theorists call *écriture féminine* is boundless, cyclical, open-ended.

215 Page 114 in *Four Tales by Zélide* (an early pseudonym), where the two-part novel occupies pp. 77–263.

216 In *The Corrupted Ones*, Father Gaudet advices Ursule: "Never wear yourself out with late nights—or by spending too many nocturnal hours in sexual activity. And, most important of all, you must observe frequent ablutions in the torrid zone of your anatomy! A woman, like the rooms of houses in the city of Amsterdam—which are washed three or four times a day—must observe the most careful hygiene in these parts" (135).

217 Perhaps I belong to the wrong gender to appreciate it: Joan Hinde Stewart calls *Caliste* "an extraordinarily powerful piece" and makes a strong case for its importance, also noting its influence on de Staël's *Corinne* (1807) and Constant's *Adolphe* (1816) (Hollier's *New History of French Literature*, 554–58).

218 *The Portrait of Zélide*, 96. His wife, Lady Sybil Scott, translated the *Four Tales by Zélide.*

219 Pages 5–6 in Rooksby's translation, hereafter cited parenthetically.

220 Rooksby: “Kant held that moral theory consisted solely of duty, in the form of a set of immutable principles that could be ascertained by the exercise of reason alone” (6n2). Charrière dramatizes the drawbacks of that rigid doctrine in the novel.

221 The witty servant was a staple of plays and operas in the 18th century, but not so much in novels, with the exception of *Jacques the Fatalist*. As the title indicates, Josephine gets equal billing with her social “betters,” an admirably egalitarian move on Charrière’s part.

222 I obviously didn’t find many of interest, but see Stewart’s *Gynographs* for an incisive overview of other female French novelists active during the second half of the 18th century.

223 Chap. 37 in Sartarelli’s translation, hereafter cited by chapter.

224 “The Aleph,” p. 276 in his *Collected Fictions*. This allusion eluded the book’s annotator.

225 Maistre wrote a sequel in 1798 entitled *Nocturnal Expedition around My Room*, which wasn’t published until 1825; it’s appealing and idiosyncratic, but inferior to his first novel.

226 Headnote to the Wainhouse–Seaver translation of *The 120 Days of Sodom*, 183. The novel itself occupies pp. 189–674 of their omnibus.

227 Sade held a low opinion of Gothic novels; they were “the necessary offspring of the revolutionary upheaval which effected the whole of Europe” and projected “into the realm of fantasy . . . the history of man in that cruel time,” but their authors faced an “unavoidable choice”: “either to develop the supernatural and risk forfeiting the reader’s credulity, or to explain nothing and fall into the most ludicrous implausibility” (“An Essay on Novels,” in *The Crimes of Love*, 13–14). He believed it was better to depict vice realistically, and in brutally blunt language. I beg the reader’s pardon for the salty language sprinkled on the next 20 pages.

228 The scroll-like manuscript, 5 centimeters wide and over 12 meters long, was discovered years later, but not published until 1904.

229 Sade’s radical philosophy is beyond the scope of this literary study, so if interested see Airaksinen’s *Philosophy of the Marquis de Sade* (originally published in 1991 with the cooler title *Of Glamor, Sex and de Sade*), as well as chap. 2 of Horkheimer and Adorno’s *Dialectic of*

Enlightenment (1947), which situates Sade's philosophy between Kant's *Critique* and Nietzsche's *Genealogy of Morals.*

230 Nonetheless, the four storytellers are among the survivors who return to Paris. A storyteller himself, Sade honors their trade, for "talent must always be respected" (247).

231 And one has to question Sade's concept of "simple passions" in part 1: in the very first anecdote a priest masturbates onto the face of a five-year-old girl, and on day 24 Duclos recalls a Frenchman who "used to have brandy rubbed over every part of his body where Nature had placed hair, then I'd put a match to those areas I'd rubbed with alcohol, and all the hair would go up in flames. He would discharge upon finding himself afire" (506)—you know, the *simple* pleasures of love.

232 Sade revised it for publication in 1791, but various setbacks (including the beheading of his publisher) delayed publication until August 1795.

233 The latter is based on the same source Diderot used—Bougainville's *Voyage around the World*—along with the travels of Captain Cook.

234 The last few pages of Dolan's essay on *Aline and Valcour* discuss the parallels to *Emile*; in his autobiographical 5th letter, Valcour describes how he once met Rousseau in Geneva.

235 Letter 23 in the Barque/Simmons translation, the first in English. Sade reiterates this point in the concluding paragraph of "An Essay on Novels."

236 As quoted/translated in Francine du Plessix Gray's excellent biography *At Home with the Marquis de Sade*, 268 (her brackets and ellipsis).

237 David Coward's translation *The Misfortunes of Virtue and Other Early Tales* contains a dozen of these, in addition to the the title story, and some of the other tales can be found in Coward's translation of *The Crimes of Love*. Some of them are novellas, but space considerations limit me to Sade's full-length novels.

238 Pages 455–56 in the Wainhouse–Seaver translation, which occupies pp. 453–743 of their *Justine, Philosophy in the Bedroom, and Other Writings*. The publication of this volume in 1965 was a historic occasion in the fight against censorship—and the first time Sade's writings were made widely available in the U.S.—but unfortunately they gave an 18th-century flavoring to their translation.

239 I'll be citing the Seaver–Wainhouse translation, where the novel occupies pp. 183–367. A new translation with fresher language and a more accurate title was published by Penguin in 2006, but Neugroschel's *Philosophy in the Boudoir* betrays the original in two serious ways: he saddles it with an unauthorized subtitle ("The Immoral Mentors") from the 1805 edition "for which Sade, then in the Charenton asylum, can scarcely have been responsible," as Seaver and Wainhouse explain (179), and it runs Sade's footnotes into the text, obscuring the difference between his commentary and his characters' dialogue.

240 The "yet another effort" Sade initially calls for is the final extermination of religion. The dechristianization of France that began in 1789 peaked in 1794, and by 1795 religious practices had begun creeping back. The rest of the pamphlet calls for increasingly outrageous public reforms, like state-sponsored brothels for libertines and the decriminalization of rape, which is why some critics suspect it's a joke, like Swift's "Modest Proposal," though with Sade you never know.

241 This version has never been translated into English, though a few passages from it can be found in Walton's composite translation of *Justine* (1964). One improvement, however gruesome, is the path of the thunderbolt that kills Justine: in the 1787 version, it enters her chest and exits her mouth, in 1791 exits her stomach, but in 1797 it penetrates her mouth and comes out her vagina—"a parody of the act of giving birth," Angela Carter suggests (100), or a cosmic rape.

242 Page 241 of her *Sexual Personae*, which has an interesting chapter on Rousseau versus Sade.

243 The relationship is epitomized in a song in Peter Weiss's brilliant play *Marat/Sade*: "They think about nothing but screwing / but we [the people] are the ones who get screwed" ("These Fat Monkeys," 42).

244 For this important tendency in Sade's novels, see chap. 2 ("Saying Everything, or the Encyclopedia of Excess") in Hénaff's *Sade* (1978).

245 A thick, infuriating book, best entitled "The Enemies of Literature," could be written about the exasperating actions of authors' families, heirs, and estates to destroy, suppress, withhold, or otherwise frustrate the publication and study of the works they inherited. I wish a law could be passed stipulating that, upon an author's death, all his or her literary remains would become the property of a literary organization, which

would thereafter facilitate and oversee future publications and research; a standard royalty would be paid to the heirs for the term of copyright, who would not otherwise be allowed to interfere with matters they ill understand.

246 See chap. 6 of Lynch's monograph for an account of them; only one, *Adelaide of Brunswick* (1812), has been translated into English (Washington, DC: Scarecrow Press, 1954).

247 Basil Valentine, on p. 235; two other characters in the novel are reading *Justine* (183–84, 925).

CHAPTER 3

The Eastern Novel

In my previous volume I needed two chapters to deal with the profusion of novels written in the East and Far East before 1600. By 1600, however, the novel was a stagnant art everywhere east of Egypt except in China, and consequently those written in this wide region in the early-modern period can be contained within a single chapter, especially since so few of them have been translated into English. There are some Chinese novels that rival anything published in Europe during this time, and several others that make for fascinating reading, but it wouldn't be until the 20th century that the novel in the east regained something of its former vitality.

CHINESE FICTION

Although outwardly China was a rich and powerful country in 1600, it was rotting within. An inefficient government run by eunuchs, lawlessness, oppression, and a series of famines, rebellions, and natural disasters led to a regime change in 1644, when Manchus from the north overthrew the Ming Dynasty and established the Qing, which would last until 1911.[1] Nonetheless, the 17th century was a robust time for the Chinese novel, and the 18th produced two novels that would be ranked with the "four extraordinary books" (*si da qishu*) of the Ming era (*Three Kingdoms, The Water Margin, Journey to the West*, and *The Plum in the Golden Vase*). The situation is not as paradoxical as it might seem; as Robert E. Hegel points out, most of the novels produced in the tumultuous 17th century were written by "members of China's cultural and social elite who in a less chaotic age might have served in positions of authority in the Confucian state. But economic, social, and particularly political changes ruled out this possibility for them, leaving them to express their concerns, their frustrations, and their insights into the meaning of their existence in a

literary form that grew to a new peak of significance through their contributions."[2]

The previous peak of Chinese fiction had been reached by the pseudonymous Scoffing Scholar's *Plum in the Golden Vase*, written in the 1590s and in circulation at the beginning of the 16th century (though not published until 1617). This huge novel brilliantly combined all of the elements we'll see in later Chinese fiction: the use of the novel as a vehicle for social criticism; frequent allusions to earlier literature and even wholesale appropriations of older texts; a more realistic vocabulary closer to the vernacular than classical Chinese; and a willingness to write candidly of sexual matters. It would be 150 years before any novelist would combine all these elements as masterfully as Xiaoxiaosheng did, but his totemic masterpiece empowered novelists to continue expanding the form.

The Embroidered Couch (*Xiuta yeshi*, 1608?) is a bite-sized version of the *Plum* that appeared under the pseudonym Master Perverse Lover, now agreed to be the playwright and critic Lu Tiancheng (1580–1618). It's little more than pornography with a warning against sexual profligacy tacked onto the end, but it's literary porn.[3] Lu pays homage to *PGV* by naming his two principals after characters in Scoffing Scholar's novel: Yao Tongxin is known as "Easterngate" after the lecherous protagonist of *PGV*, Hsi-men Ch'ing, whose name can be translated "Western Gate of the Fortunate," and his oversexed wife Jin is named after *PGV*'s toxic heroine Jinlian (W–G Chin-lien, meaning "Golden Lotus"), plainly so when Easterngate has her feet on his shoulders during sex and says of them "they are really a pair of three-inch golden lotuses!"[4]

Easterngate is a scholar in his late 20s with lots of time on his hands—we never see him practicing his profession—which he spends having sex with both his wife and a younger, well-endowed scholar named Zhao Dali. Sensing an attraction between the two, Easterngate allows them to go to it one evening while he watches from outside, an epic fornication that in its pornographic excess recalls *The Lord of Perfect Satisfaction* (1520s), which is cited a few times and was an obvious model. Dali returns for another bout the next day, and like Hsi-men Ch'ing in *PGV* obtains some aphrodisiacs from a Buddhist and surreptitiously slips one into Jin's cunt. (That's the kind of diction the novel uses, coarse words with few attempts at poetic

euphemism.) Another epic fornication follows, which also involves Jin's two maids, but later Jin suffers from the aphrodisiac's side effects. Easterngate nurses his wife back to health and together they decide to revenge themselves on Dali by seducing his widowed mother. A lesbian scene follows, then a bedtrick, then the deflowering of a maid named Little Pretty, and finally a reconciliation after which Dali is welcomed as a new husband for Jin while Easterngate takes the young widow. The older scholar hasn't lost his taste for the younger scholar's rump, so some outrageous three-ways ensue, and eventually everyone dies of sexual exhaustion except for Easterngate, who becomes a Buddhist monk and tells his scurrilous story to anyone who will listen, intended as "well-meaning advice for being good" (140).

Like Scoffing Scholar, Lu cites the classics in ironically degrading circumstances, but the short novel lacks the longer novel's equation of sexual excess with social decline. In fact the longest, most convincing passage in *The Embroidered Couch* is Jin's exhortation to the widow not to waste her life in chastity (103–5), and Lu clearly intended his novel to be a celebration of sex, or at least a depiction of how some debauched scholars regarded sex in the liberal Lower Yangtze delta area of his time. It was popular with the literati during the rest of the Ming era, but once the puritanical Manchus came to power it was banned, and to this day *The Embroidered Couch* is shunned by conservative Chinese critics. It should be shunned by anyone lacking a strong stomach, for several of the sexual scenes are gratuitously disgusting.

The erotic element of *The Plum in the Golden Vase* was likewise stripped from its sociopolitical context for *Zhaoyang qushi* (The Intriguing History of Zhaoyang Palace), written sometime before 1621 by the pseudonymous Guhang yanyan sheng, in which the fox-spirit Daji from Xu Zhonglin's 16th-century novel *Creation of the Gods* is reborn as Hede, the sexually voracious concubine of Emperor Han Chengdi. After a series of sexual adventures, the vixen eventually kills the emperor via an overdose of aphrodisiacs, just as Chin-lien did with Hsi-men in *PGV*, but the untranslated novel sounds like merely a sensationalist exploitation of the sexual side of fox-spirit lore.[5]

Such lore dominates *The Sorcerer's Revolt* (*Ping yao zhuan*, 1620), a lively, 500-page novel by Feng Menglong (1574–1646), one of the most industrious writers of the 17th century. (A recent Chinese edition of his complete works takes up six feet of shelf-space.) A rich, well-read bohemian, he wrote folk songs, gambling handbooks, biographies of courtesans (with whom he was very popular), study guides, plays, jokebooks, histories, anthologies, and novels, of which *The Sorcerer's Revolt* is the best known. It was based on an older novel called *The Three Sui Quash the Demons' Revolt—sui* is an element in the names of the three characters who suppress the revolt—traditionally ascribed to Luo Guanzhong, author of the 14th-century classics *Three Kingdoms* and *The Water Margin,* though this is unlikely. It was probably written in the 15th century, and consisted of 20 chapters.[6] Feng doubled its length by adding 15 chapters of backstory at the beginning and inserting five chapters of additional material throughout the rest.

The Sorcerer's Revolt is a supernatural retelling of a mutiny led in 1047 by an army officer who dabbled in sorcery named Wang Ze, which was quelled after 66 days by the imperial army. Feng magnifies this to cosmic proportions by starting his tale in the 8th century and introducing a white ape named Yuan Gong, who is obviously based on Monkey from *The Journey to the West* (c. 1580).[7] Like Wu Chengen's irascible simian, Yuan Gong is dissatisfied with his low position in the Jade Emperor's heavenly palace and one day steals a Daoist spellbook, which he takes back to his earthly cave for further study. He begins to copy it onto the walls in order to share the secrets of heaven with mankind—there's a touch of both Prometheus and Faust about him—but he manages to transcribe only two-thirds of it before the Thunder Lord bolts down from heaven and arrests the book thief. He is pardoned after he argues he had merely wanted to spread the Dao to others, not expose heaven's secrets, so he is condemned to guard his cave against outsiders curious about the occult text on the wall.

The narrator then jumps ahead two centuries to the year 998 and introduces the villainess of the piece, a fox-spirit known (in human form) as Holy Auntie; she and her two offspring—a crippled son named Chu and a nubile daughter named Mei—dominate the first quarter of the novel, an episodic romp through Chinese folklore and demonology that concludes

with the proclamation of Holy Auntie as a living Buddha. Well-educated Feng Menglong drops enough hints that he is satirizing his countrymen's uneducated belief in magic, reincarnation, and religion. "Truly, there must have been some pretty shallow minds about!" he sneers.[8]

A monk born from an egg hears of the heavenly text in Yuan Gong's cave, and over the course of the next few chapters he makes three attempts to read the "thunderscript," which allows Feng to further satirize Chinese superstition and Buddhist hypocrisy. (Most of the Buddhists in the novel are hard-hearted and/or lecherous.) At chapter 16 we reach the beginning of the 15th-century version of the novel, which introduces various sorcerers and corrupt officials into the mix. Feng's association of sorcerers with rebels gives them some appeal at first: the sorcerers Zhang Ying and Pu Ji kill a corrupt governor, which demonizes them in the eyes of the imperial government. Feng literalizes this by giving them magical powers; soon the rebels become as corrupt as the officials they overthrew, but Feng's symbolic alignment of rebellion and heterodoxy with sorcery and magic adds an interesting twist to the historical record.

The rebel Wang Ze is introduced in chapter 31, and the second half of the novel deals with his rise to power with the help of sorcerers (read sleazy political advisors), his descent into debauchery and tyranny, and his eventual defeat at the hands of the imperial army, all of it enlivened by magic, intrigue, and suspense. The immortal white ape from the beginning of the novel returns in chapter 37, and the imperial suppression of the rebels is likened to the desire of the Jade Emperor to restore order to the cosmos. Thus the historical Wang Ze's two-month rebellion became in Feng's hands a two-century epic battle between good and evil involving gods and mortals, a comic-book restatement of the grand Chinese/Daoist theme of the need for cosmic harmony between heaven and earth.

Despite its lofty theme, the novel is very homely in its particulars. There are episodes dealing with shopkeepers, characters interrupted in the middle of sex, wedding ceremonies, burial rites, petty squabbles among monks, acts of seduction, the grind of poverty, political infighting, and mundane observations like "it really makes you mad the way waiters and shop assistants drag their feet when called" (10). All in all, it's a much more realistic treatment of life than, say, *Creation of the Gods,* which *The*

Sorcerer's Revolt otherwise resembles. The dialogue is very natural, as is the narrative style; erudite Feng plays "your humble storyteller" (7) and frequently reminds readers of earlier plot-points to help them along. He was obviously writing for a popular audience, not the elite for whom complex novels like *The Plum in the Golden Vase* were written, and devoted the rest of his writing career to championing vernacular literature. The same year he published *The Sorcerer's Revolt* he brought out *Stories Old and New* (*Gujin xiaoshuo*, 1620), the first of three huge anthologies that preserved China's rich heritage of tales and short stories. (As he did with the novel, Feng often revised the older stories and contributed about 35 of his own.) In the preface to *Stories Old and New* he makes no apology for abandoning "an elegant style that appealed to literary minds":

> Now common ears outnumber literary minds in our world, and fiction draws less from the elegant than from the colloquial style. Just ask the storytellers to demonstrate in public their art of description: they will gladden you, astonish you, move you to sad tears, rouse you to song and dance; they will prompt you to draw a sword, bow in reverence, cut off a head, or donate money. The faint-hearted will be made brave, the debauched chaste, the unkind compassionate, the obtuse ashamed. One may well intone the *Classic of Filial Piety* [Xiaojing] and the *Analects of Confucius* every day, yet he will not be moved so quickly nor so profoundly as by these storytellers. Can anything less accessible achieve such effect?[9]

To claim popular fiction is superior to the Confucian classics would have been ridiculous and heretical at any earlier time, and Feng Menglong's spirited defense shows how confident in their art Chinese fiction writers had become by the 17th century.

Confucianism is treated even more contemptuously in another long, supernatural novel that appeared a few years later, *The Story of Han Xiangzi* (*Han Xiangzi quanzhuan*, 1623) by Yang Erzeng, a scholar who ran two publishing houses in Hangzhou in the early years of the 17th century. (One of them was called the Hall of Purity in Poverty, a good name today for an idealistic small press.) After publishing a few successful books on Daoism, Yang decided to try his hand at a Daoist novel. Following Feng Menglong's

m.o., he found an old novella entitled *The Story of Immortal Han* (*Han xian zhuan*) and expanded it to a 30-chapter novel, drawing additional inspiration from a 16th-century play entitled *Ascension to Immortality* and from the many stories and ballads about a man who allegedly became immortal via Daoist "inner alchemy." And like *The Sorcerer's Revolt, Han Xiangzi* is set in the distant past, in this case in the middle of the Tang Dynasty, though it starts even earlier, as its English translator explains:

> The storyline begins in the Han dynasty [206 bce–220 ce], where Han Xiangzi's previous incarnation is a beautiful but haughty woman, who is consequently reborn as a white crane. The crane cultivates himself and meets Zhongli Quan and Lü Dongbin. They deliver him to be reborn as the son of Han Yu's elder brother Han Hui [in the year 780]. After Han Hui's and his wife's death, Han Xiangzi is raised in Han Yu's household, where he is treated like a son (as he is the only male offspring of the Han family). Han Yu has great expectations of Han Xiangzi, but the latter follows his destiny and runs away from home to join his masters Zhongli Quan and Lü Dongbin in the Zhongnan Mountains. There he practices inner alchemy and becomes an immortal. The Jade Emperor sends him back to earth to deliver his uncle Han Yu, his aunt, and his wife, Lin Luying. After many failed attempts to break down Han Yu's Confucian obstinacy, he delivers him at Blue Pass, and later does the same for his aunt and wife.[10]

Han Xiangzi follows the structure of classic Chinese novels: each chapter has a two-part title (e.g., "Abandoning His Family Bonds, Xiangzi Cultivates Himself / A Transformed Beauty Tempts Xiangzi for the First Time") and the novel falls into groups of 10: chapters 1–10 give us Xiangzi's background, his attainment of immortality, and his return to "deliver" his Confucian uncle; 11–20 track his dozen attempts to wear down his uncle, who resists and eventually hits bottom during a snowstorm at Blue Pass; and 21–30 concern Xiangzi's redemption of the rest of his extended family, all of whom turn out to be celestial beings who were banished to earth for some minor infraction. The ostensible purpose is to champion Daoism over superstitious Buddhism and worldly Confucianism.

If it were no more than a didactic conversion story, Yang's novel would have limited appeal. The plot is predictable even to the Westerner unfamiliar with the legends of Han Xiangzi, and the smarmy confidence of the born-again Daoist is as repulsive as that of any priggish hero of Christian hagiography. What puts the tang in this Tang-era novel are all the slurs against Daoists that Yang records with surprising frequency. The Daoist rejection of conventional life and its social obligations in favor of communing with nature and cultivating the inner self is dismissed by most of the novel's characters as mere laziness and irresponsibility. Daoists are taunted for abandoning their wives and families, sleeping until noon, dressing funny, drinking wine and doing drugs—lots of pills are popped in this novel, and one Daoist instructress is known as the Hemp Maiden—for seducing pretty boys to join them, acting as pimps for their female acolytes, panhandling, reading occult books like *The Yellow Court Scripture*, "selling false medicines in the street" (5), spouting glib nonsense, and so on, as though they were a bunch of hippies or brainwashed cult members—which, given human nature, many probably were. And although Daoist principles are exalted, the actual practices of Daoists are reprehensible. " 'Masters,' one character complains, " 'if you are divine immortals, why do you speak like extortionists?' " (28). Here's how another character describes Xiangzi's two immortal patrons:

> "If you are talking about that Zhongli," replied the herdboy, "He's a hot-tempered, covetous demon. He kills people without batting an eye. He is certainly no divine immortal!"
>
> "It would not happen to be Master Lü Dongbin?" Xiangzi then asked.
>
> The herdboy laughed and said, "Daoist Lü got drunk three times in the tower of Yueyang, played selfishly with White Peony [a courtesan], sold false ink in Dingzhou, and hawked poor combs in Xunyang. Every time, he used trickery to cheat people. He is even less a divine immortal than Zhongli." (7)[11]

Xiangzi in particular is an irritating gadfly, a habitual liar, and wreaks all sorts of havoc on his uncle and aunt in order to ruin them and thus soften them up for conversion. (He ignores his patient wife Luying from the beginning, refuses to sleep with her, abandons her, and "delivers" her last.)

Han Yu, his uncle, is an especially good character—an upright official, devoted family man, a hero to his subjects, and a patron of literature—and so the hardships and mind-games his unfilial nephew inflicts on him create more sympathy for the principled Confucian than for the mystical Daoist.

It could be that Yang Erzeng inserted all the anti-Daoist sentiments to expose the prejudices unenlightened people hold against these enlightened beings, but the relentless frequency with which Yang salts his text with references to "filthy" Daoists who engage in "frivolous trickery" works against that, especially in scenes like the following, in which Xiangzi deals drugs and deliverance to some citizens of Chang'an:

> Immediately the Daoist took on the exact appearance of Xiangzi. Mme. Dou [his aunt] said, "Do you think you can move me with your tricks?"
>
> "What if I delivered another person to accompany you in leaving the family?" Xiangzi said.
>
> "Who?" asked Mme. Dou.
>
> Xiangzi then scraped some black dirt from his armpit, mixed it with some mucus and saliva, and molded it into a big pellet. Holding it on his palm, he called out, "If there is anyone with the right affinity who will eat this magical drug of mine, I will deliver him to become an immortal."
>
> Old Wo hurried forward, took it, and swallowed it in one piece. Right away clouds lifted up his feet and he floated in mid-air. (24)

Of course, within the context of the novel, the Daoists are real immortals and everyone else is deluded, but to Yang's Chinese readers who avoided itinerant Daoist bums in their own streets (as Americans used to dodge Hare Krishnas in airports), it was the Daoists who were "self-assured, stupid, and deluded" (29). As this scene shows, Yang likes to literalize concepts—his characters don't simply "get high" but literally float away—and the arcane Daoist terminology he throws around (plagiarized in chunks from other books) can likewise be regarded as exotic hypostatizations of mundane activities like self-reflection and -discipline. At several points in the novel, the author records a group of people offering different interpretations of an event, probably a warning to readers to take care when interpreting his novel.

Han Xiangzi isn't a great novel, but there's enough tension between its ostensible pro-Daoist theme and its anti-Daoist subtext to make it an interesting one. It starts off rather clumsily—as though Yang discovered, like many an editor after him, that it's easier to publish a novel than to write one—and there are too many plot recapitulations and formulaic elements. (Both nephew and uncle are tested on their way to deliverance by seductive women.) But there is a raffish tone that one certainly doesn't find in Christian conversion novels, some clever wordplay and symbolism, talking animals (always a treat), paintings that come alive, a descent to the underworld (one of many scenes inspired by *The Journey to the West*), many fine poems, and even singing: characters frequently break into song as though in a musical. There's even a singing goat. And in Han Yu we have an example, rare in Chinese fiction, of an appointed official who actually works for the public good (until his insidious nephew convinces him to forsake public life).

In 1627 the tyrannical eunuch Wei Zongxian died, and the following year a writer calling himself "The Chang'an Daoist" (Chang'an Daoren) published a lively, 40-chapter novel mocking the eunuch called *Yin-yang Dreams to Caution the World* (*Jingshi yinyang meng*). The first 30 chapters concern Wei's "yang dream" in the real world, and the concluding 10 his "yin dream" in the underworld, where he is tortured along with his accomplices. The author is a character in the novel, and after witnessing the eunuch's punishment is given a "long tongue" by an immortal to recount what he has seen. (The term usually referred to a yakking woman.) Although the novel expounds the Buddhist notion that life is a but a dream, the author's "jesting, self-mockery, and self-reflexivity" suggests much more is afoot—it sounds like a Chinese version of Stanley Elkin's *Living End*—but unfortunately the novel remains untranslated.[12]

But most Chinese novelists went further back in history to find admonitory parallels to "caution the world" about what was going on in their own time. In the 1620s, Fang Ruhao published two novels set a thousand years earlier: the 40-chapter *Lost Tales of the True Way* (*Chan zhen yishi*) concerns a Buddhist monk and three disciples who help found the Sui Dynasty (581), while in the 60-chapter *Later Tales of the True Way* (*Chan zhen hou shi*) one of those disciples is reincarnated during the reign

of evil Empress Wu Zetian (ruled 684–705) and helps rectify the state. Neither has been translated, but according to Daria Berg they follow in the grand tradition of Luo Guanzhong's *Three Kingdoms* and *The Water Margin* "in their depictions of competing states, adventures involving bandits and rebels, battles with monsters and demons, and erotic encounters."[13]

Another veiled attack on contemporary politics via historical fiction is *The Merry Adventures of Emperor Yang* (*Sui Yangdi yanshi*, literally "The 'Romantic' History of Emperor Yang of the Sui"), a novel published in 1631 by the pseudonymous Qidongyeren ("Hick from the Sticks").[14] Everyone in 17th-century China knew Emperor Yang (ruled 589–618) was a proverbial bad ruler who exploited and overtaxed his subjects while indulging in personal extravagances. While expanding the various historical records and earlier short stories about Yang to novel length, Qidongyeren set up obvious parallels between the Sui Dynasty despot and the late Ming emperor, Wan-li, who had died in 1620 after a 47-year reign as bad as anyone's in Chinese history. Like *The Water Margin* and other classics, *Emperor Yang* tests the concept of loyalty: while a noble virtue in the abstract, loyalty to an incompetent, dangerous ruler is problematic, and elicits different responses from the main characters in the novel. A clever dwarf named Wang I is loyal to the person of the emperor, going so far as to emasculate himself (as if dwarfism weren't enough of a handicap) so that he can hang out with the emperor during his lengthy periods in his well-stocked harem. Yu Shih-nan, a political yes-man, is mindlessly loyal to the emperor in the same amoral way German prison guards were to Hitler. Yang's principal wife is loyal to the office of emperor, no matter who occupies it; after her husband is strangled, she climbs into bed with his successor. Similarly, Yang's concubine Chu Kuei-erh is loyal to the divine prestige of the emperor, no matter how bad he acts. But the author makes it clear that what ultimately matters is that Yang was disloyal to his office (and thus disloyal to heaven), thereby deserving to be killed.

Emperor Yang sounds like a well-made novel; like earlier Chinese classics, its chapters are structured dramatically in groups of 10, with elements from the opening chapters reprised with new meaning near the end. It makes intelligent use of its sources, and to Hegel it's obviously "the product of meticulous planning, a clear design, careful compilation, and

thorough polishing" (85). It was popular in its day, but faded after it was suppressed by the Manchu, along with *The Water Margin*, for justifying rebellion against unjust rulers.

Parts of *Emperor Yang* were incorporated into an even better novel published a few years later, *Forgotten Tales of the Sui* (*Sui shi yiwen*, 1633) by Yuan Yuling (1592–1674).[15] As the title indicates, it takes place during the Sui Dynasty, though it spills over onto the early years of the Tang (established 618), mirroring the same end-of-an-era turmoil of Yuan's own time. The protagonist is a historical character named Ch'in Shu-pao (d. 638); his later career as a successful Tang general was well known, but Yuan wanted to dramatize his early days as a young man making his uncertain way through a chaotic world of civil unrest and widespread crime.

Born into a military family, young Ch'in neglects his studies to concentrate on weapons and strategy, then becomes "something of a hooligan," Hegel tells us, "getting into fights for the avowed purpose of righting wrongs in the manner of a knight-errant" (124). His mother talks him into become a minor constable, and then the romantic teen gets his first taste of the real world while transporting prisoners. He fights off some brigands, gets mixed up in an accidental homicide, goes broke, kills a rapist (which results in the deaths of hundreds of others), and comes to feel like a failure. He later turns his life around and becomes the famous general of Chinese history, but his character development represents a major innovation in Yuan's hands. Since most characters in earlier Chinese fiction are one-dimensional types who show little development, Ch'in's growth "from teen-age uncertainty to mature self-assurance" (Hegel, 112) represents a radical change in the concept of literary characterization. Equally novel is the point of view of one individual's reaction to his times rather than the communal overview most previous novelists used.

Hegel praises Yuan Yuling's naturalistic dialogue and unflinching adherence to realism: he translates the 2,000-word rape scene mentioned above, a brutally graphic account that no European novelist of the 17th-century would have dared to write, not even Grimmelshausen. Yuan blurs the easy distinctions between right and wrong, fate and freedom, and guilt and innocence in a manner that sounds very modern. But like most innovative fiction, *Forgotten Tales of the Sui* was soon forgotten. It was not

reprinted after the first edition of 1633, and much of it was plagiarized later by Chu Renhuo for a lengthy, derivative novel called *Romance of the Sui and the Tang* (*Sui Tang yanyi*, 1695).

On a lighter note, there is *The Jealous Wife* (*Cu hulu,* literally "Gourd of Vinegar," c. 1639) by the pseudonymous Fuci Jiaozhu (Leader of the Women-taming Sect), a short, outrageous novel about a shrewish wife—a perennial target in classic Chinese fiction since the Tang era. The tone of the novel is set in the first chapter when the narrator observes "during the sexual act [the wife] is indeed on the bottom, but outside of that she is always climbing on top of her husband's head and taking a dump."[16] A wealthy, spoiled girl married to a modest orphan, Madame Du lords it over her husband, beats him regularly, and is so jealous she marks his penis each morning and checks it at night to make sure the mark hasn't been worn off by any illicit friction. Childless after 40 years of marriage, she allows him to take a concubine, but gets one with an impenetrable vagina. The husband manages instead to impregnate her maid, whom Madame Du tries to murder. For this her soul is sent to hell for correction, where the "bone of jealousy" is removed from her back, and then returned to the yang world. (The infernal descent seems to be based on that in *Yin-yang Dreams to Caution the World*.) The henpecked husband, the tamed shrew, and the fertile maid can now live in harmony. Although the proper relationship between husband and wife is a serious theme in other Chinese novels, as we'll see, here it is played mostly for laughs. Wu writes, "The author is playful even in relating the grotesque tortures Madame Du suffers in the underworld, such as being burned in a cauldron of boiling oil, bitten by snakes, and having her entrails cut out" (52). Brutal physical comedy isn't for all tastes, but *The Jealous Wife* is another indication of the expanding range of Chinese fiction during the 17th century.

The most innovative novel of this period is undoubtedly *The Tower of Myriad Mirrors* (*Xiyou bu*, 1641), written by a young man named Tung Yueh (P Dong Yue, 1620–86). Its Chinese title translates "A Supplement to *The Journey to the West*"; several other novelists at this time were writing sequels to the great masterpieces of Ming fiction, but Tung's short novel is intended to take place between chapters 61 and 62 of Wu Chengen's lengthy original. It begins by announcing that a spirit called the Ch'ing Fish

(a mackerel) will be Monkey's next opponent on his pilgrimage to India, but it soon becomes apparent that Monkey is dreaming. And befitting what the author calls the "upside-down" nature of dreams, what follows is a dream-quest closer to *Alice in Wonderland* than to Wu's road novel.[17]

A devout Buddhist who was convinced desire is the cause of suffering, Tung Yueh leads Monkey through a dreamscape of desires involving power, knowledge, and sex. In Wu Chengen's original, Monkey relies on his strength to overcome obstacles, but is sometimes too quick to judge people and events by appearances (the illusory sensory world), often with fatal results. The Ch'ing Fish seeks to overcome Monkey by confronting him with things that make little sense on the surface, like the race of "sky-walkers" who are digging holes in the sky. Monkey's baffled reaction tracks his realization that surface appearances are subject to multiple interpretations (and displays Tung's gift for surrealistic flights of fancy):

> Monkey considered, "They don't have the look of celestial workers or ominous or evil stars. They are obviously people from earth, but why are they doing this sort of work here? They aren't monsters disguised as men because I see no evil aura about them. Could it be that Heaven is infected with scabies and needs people to scratch its back? Or maybe Heaven has grown extra bones and has asked a surgeon to remove them? Or maybe Heaven is too old and they are chiseling it away so they can put in a new one. Or maybe Heaven has been covered by a screen, and they are removing the false Heaven for the real one. Or maybe the Milky Way has flooded and they are channeling away the excess. Or maybe they are rebuilding the Palace of Magic Mists and this is an auspicious day to break ground. Or maybe Heaven likes elaboration and has asked these people to carve a myriad lines to make a beautiful scene. Or maybe the Jade Emperor misses this mortal world and they are opening an imperial road so he can visit more often." (3)

None of these is correct, by the way; the sky-crew is creating a shortcut so that Tripitaka can visit the Jade Emperor's palace for a pass because the ruler of the kingdom called Great Compassion has erected a sky-high bronze wall to block Monkey's way to India. (The laborers miscalculated

earlier and the palace fell through a hole.) The bronze wall reminds Monkey of the Great Wall erected by Emperor Ch'in in the third century bce, so the dreaming Monkey goes in search of Ch'in, but stumbles upon the Tower of Myriad Mirrors instead, where the surface of things is again multiplied to incomprehensible lengths in another fanciful catalog:

> Monkey could not see where he had come in and felt bewildered. He looked up and saw that the four walls were made of precious mirrors placed one above another. In all there must have been a million mirrors —large, small, and odd-shaped; square ones, round ones, and others. He couldn't count them all, but a few of the ones he recognized included a Heavenly Emperor mirror with an animal-shaped hook; a white jade heart mirror; a self-doubt mirror; a blossom mirror; a wind mirror; a pair of bird mirrors, male and female; a mirror that looked like a purple cotton lotus; a water mirror; an ice-terrace mirror; an iron-faced lotus mirror; a "me" mirror; a man mirror; a moon mirror; a Hai-nan mirror; a mirror in the shape of Emperor Wu of Han pining for his lady; a green lock mirror; a stillness mirror; a nothing mirror; a bronze mirror with seal-style characters in the hand of Li Ssu of the Ch'in Dynasty; a parrot mirror; a mute mirror; a mirror that retains reflections; a mirror shaped like the first concubine of Emperor Hsüan-yüan; a one-smile mirror; a pillow mirror; a reflectionless mirror; and a flying mirror.
>
> Monkey thought, "This will be fun. Let me reflect a hundred, a thousand, ten thousand, and a hundred million of me." He went to start mirroring himself, but instead of his own image, what he saw was that every mirror contained other heavens and earths, suns and moons, mountains and forests. (4)

Monkey's once-unified ego scatters in the myriad mirrors, and his former reliance on physical strength is gone: "Amazed, he could do nothing but let his eyes wander," the passage continues. Soon he is transformed into Beautiful Lady Yu for a series of adventures, then finds himself judging the dead in hell, then meets a son he will have in the future, until finally "the Master of the Void" comes to wake him and to explain that his long dream was an illusion created by the Ch'ing Fish, which means *The Tower of the Myriad Mirrors* is like an illusory world created by an evil spirit.

My author is a Ch'ing Fish.

The spirit turns out to be Monkey's evil doppelganger who had hoped to distract him long enough to kill Tripitaka and thereby gain immortality. Fully awake, Monkey notices a new monk closing in on his master and without hesitation cudgels him to death. Monkey resumes his search for food for his master, and there Tung Yueh's supplement ends and *The Journey to the West* resumes.

In *Finnegans Wake*, Joyce generates much of his dream-content via puns and wordplay, and was anticipated in this regard by Tung.[18] He rings changes on the sound *ch'ing* (P: *qing*), which depending on the characters used can mean a mackerel, "green," "desire," or the Ch'ing Dynasty. The Green Green World is the name given to the dreamscape the Ch'ing Fish has created, but it is also the red red sensual world, for according to the author, "*The Tower of Myriad Mirrors* is a dream of desire" (appendix). In chapter 60 of *The Journey to the West*—probably the sexiest chapter in Wu Chengen's novel—Monkey ogles the concubine of his enemy the Bull Demon King and then seduces his wife into surrendering her magic fan. He gets her drunk and almost has sex with her, which follows an earlier encounter with Monkey that she later describes in terms symbolizing a violent rape.[19] Surprised by lust, the anxious, guilt-ridden Monkey dreams of ridding himself of desire, made harder by the presence of several dreamgirls with faces like peach blossoms and names like Green Pearl, Miss Silk, and Rearview Allure. (I hope that's not a mistranslation.) Evoking an ancient Chinese metaphor for fornication, Monkey says, "I regret my heart follows clouds and rain in flight," spoken while disguised as Lady Yu on a night out with the girls, which ends brutally after Monkey returns to simian form and with his rod beats four of them "to red powder" (5). Finally, Ch'ing is the name the invading Manchus had already chosen for their future dynasty, and in 1641 Tung, like many literati, knew it would be only a short while before they took over, causing anxiety of a more palpable kind. In this sense, the novel is Tung's escape from anxious reality into a dream of his own making.

Before *The Tower of Myriad Mirrors*, dreams in literature were strange in content only; they usually followed a linear form that resembled everyday causality so closely that sometimes it is not even apparent a character is

dreaming until the narrator concludes with something like "she awakened soaked in sweat. For it had all been a dream, and a bad one at that" (*The Sorcerer's Revolt,* chap. 6). But Tung successfully replicates the hallucinatory weirdness of an actual dream: time is inexplicably contracted or expanded, characters transform into others, concepts are literalized, and seemingly illogical incongruities puzzle the dreamer. Though set in the 7th century, Monkey's dream jumps around from the ancient past to the distant future; he enters the Tower of Myriad Mirrors first by tripping on a green stone, and later by falling into a pool; as the judge in hell, he orders a variety of bizarre executions on a traitor, who is repeatedly "blown back" into human form after being obliterated; hexagrams from the *I Ching* change into vines, then railings, then into confining ropes; a calendar runs backward; a fairy cave not only contains clouds, but they form "a tapestry of palindromes" (11); and there are Zenny similes like "Monkey made a sound like a flower falling on an empty stairway" (7) and "They slashed him into snowflakes" (9). What is a "mute mirror," or a "reflectionless mirror"? In a few places Monkey gazes incomprehensibly at practices current in Tung's own age (like its maddening civil-service examination system) or listens to a poetic recitation of previous episodes of *The Journey to the West*, recalling Don Quixote coming upon a novel about his exploits in a bookshop. The result is mindblowing, and it's amazing that a 21-year-old student writing at the end of the Ming Dynasty could create a fiction that anticipates in so many particulars the works of Carroll, Freud, Kafka, Jung, Joyce, and Borges.

Fully aware of the difficulties readers would have comprehending his unconventional novel, Tung Yueh helps us out with metafictional commentary. The novel is prefaced by five pages of questions and answers —like a FAQ page on a *website*—which underline the novel's Buddhist's perspective, though not always as clearly as a non-Buddhist would wish. ("Q. When the Great Sage [Monkey] emerges from the Demon of Desire, there is the chaos of the five colored banners. Why is this? A. The *Purity Sūtra* says that when chaos runs its course, there is a return to the root. When desire reaches its extremity, you see your own nature.") Tung also adds a few lines of commentary at the end of each chapter, some congratulatory ("*The description of Monkey putting on a majestic air is indeed hilarious*" [8]), some thematic ("*Gathering in the strayed heart is*

the main idea of this book. It is disclosed here" [11]), and some as baffling as the incidents they describe ("*The ladies' teasing jibes are like pictures. Though full-fleshed they're not bloated, but like plum blossoms, pure and thin*" [5]).[20] These devices, along with the text's self-reflexivity and radical innovations, add to the novel's postmodern aura.[21] But not surprisingly, and despite Tung Yueh's explanatory notes, the novel was too weird, too experimental for most readers and languished in obscurity until the 20th century, by which time other experimental novels had taught readers how to enter *The Tower of Myriad Mirrors*.

The witty and worldly Li Yu (1611–80) gives readers even more instructions for reading his iconoclastic novel, *The Carnal Prayer Mat* (*Rou putuan* [W–G *Jou pu tuan*], 1657). A comic erotic novel in 20 chapters, it begins with an introduction in which the author announces his theme—the evils of adultery—and justifies his use of graphic sexual content. The reading public isn't interested in moral tracts, he notes, "but they love fiction. Not all fiction, mind you, for they are sick of exemplary themes and far prefer the obscene and the fantastic."[22] Pretending that the best way to teach a moral lesson is to wrap it in an immoral package, Li Yu admits: "Its descriptions of copulation, of the pleasures of the bedchamber, do indeed come close to indecency, but they are all designed to lure people into reading on until they reach the dénouement, at which point they will understand the meaning of retribution and take heed" (1). In addition, each chapter concludes (as did Tung Yueh's *Tower*) with a "critique," ostensibly written by a friend named Sun Zhi but probably written by Li himself, in which he notes how cleverly the author develops the theme and how innovative his fiction techniques are. The results are remarkable (*qi*) and ingenious (*qiao*), the two qualities Li Yu treasured most in works of art.[23]

The narrative proper gets underway in chapter 2. We're introduced to a Buddhist monk named Lone Peak, and are told enough about him that we assume he will be the protagonist of the novel, though in fact he's a minor character who disappears at the end of the chapter and won't be seen again until the novel's conclusion – a "rejection of conventional practice" proudly noted in the critique to chapter 2. The old monk receives a visit from a handsome young man who is the true protagonist of the novel, Weiyang

Sheng, a nickname referring to his favorite time for amorous pursuits: the Before Midnight Scholar. (So he was called in the first English translation by Richard Martin [1963], but its second translator Patrick Hanan gives him the jarring Latin name Vesperus.) He has come to discuss Zen subtleties with the monk, who spots him for a lecher and tries to persuade him to renounce the world and take up the religious life. But Vesperus wants to worship on the carnal prayer mat of women's bodies, not on a religious one of straw. Determined to become a great poet and to marry the most beautiful girl in the world, Vesperus ignores the monk's warning that even if he finds and marries such a girl, he's bound to see someone even more beautiful and be tempted to commit adultery, which will lead someone to seduce his wife in retribution, to the misery of all concerned. And this is exactly what happens, though with many clever twists and turns.

Vesperus marries the most beautiful girl in town, Jade Scent, the only daughter of a puritanical Confucian nicknamed Iron Door. Though attractive, 15-year-old Scent is sexually ignorant and has to be tutored by our scholar, who brings her erotic picture books and novels like *The Embroidered Couch.*[24] Scent is a quick study, but Vesperus tires of his oppressive father-in-law and wants to seek out further erotic experiences, so he leaves under the pretense of furthering his academic studies. At another town he falls in with a master criminal who agrees to help Vesperus find potential adulteresses— unlike in the European novel, experienced women, not virgins, are the libertine's target—but first there is a little matter to attend to. Turns out Vesperus is woefully underendowed, so he finds a Daoist who surgically extends his penis with that of a dog. In his critique to this chapter, Li hastens to warn any copycats among his readers: "The surgical implant of a dog's member into a human being, as related in this chapter, is a palpable absurdity, which implies that Vesperus's actions are going to be bestial in nature" (8).

Straining at the leash, Vesperus first seduces a woman named Fragrance, married to the struggling silk merchant Honest Quan, who will eventually seduce Vesperus's wife Scent (note the similar names) in revenge and sell her into prostitution. Then Vesperus gets involved with three cousins and their aunt, both singly and together in a climactic orgy. (At no point does the author blame Vesperus's lovers for ruining him, or treat them as victims.

As one of them says, “There’s no sightseeing or visiting for us, as there is for men. Sex is the one diversion we have in our lives, and surely no one can tell us not to enjoy that!” [9].) Worn out, he seeks out a wonder-working prostitute he’s heard of from the sisters’ returning husbands (who have enjoyed her ministrations), and discovers to his horror that it’s his wife Jade Scent. She hangs herself in shame—if this comic novel had room for a tragic heroine, she would be it—and after a public humiliation Vesperus makes his way back to the Buddhist retreat of Lone Peak, who has recently acquired a new disciple: none other than guilt-ridden Honest Quan. Vesperus devotes himself to the religious life, though he still has carnal urges. (Li casually notes most clergy deal with these urges either by masturbating or by buggering their young disciples.) One night Vesperus has an erotic dream about his former mistresses but is awakened by a barking *dog*—a reminder that he has not yet shed his bestial nature. He then to decides to cut off his canine-enhanced penis, and only then does he find peace of mind.

I doubt the novel’s extensive sex scenes convinced many readers to avoid adultery, and I doubt Li Yu expected them to. While he may have been sincere in recommending (as he does in chapter 1) that a man satisfy himself with his own wives and concubines and not seduce those of other men, his mocking tone throughout suggests the only thing he was sincere about was *aesthetic* pleasure. In his critiques, Li notes the subtlety of the novel’s structure, his innovative blending of expository discourse with narrative, and the deliberate deceptions he plays on readers to keep them on their toes and to remind them of his ingenuity. The prose itself is playful and witty: as in the title, Li is fond of describing sex in terms of religion, politics, war, or the Chinese examination system, mocking them all (and/or elevating sex) in the process. He often applies quotations from the classics to ribald situations, and will use a Confucian concept like the Doctrine of the Mean to describe routine sex. Although he pays lip-service to the Buddhist notion of karmic retribution, Li was solely interested in *poetic* (not divine) justice, of putting his characters through a mazy plot and assigning them aesthetically appropriate ends. Li was bold enough to make his protagonist an antihero, just as he was the first to make a clown the male lead in a play.[25] More than any other Chinese novel before it, *The Carnal*

Prayer Mat strikes the reader as a constructed work of art, rather than a twice-told tale based on historical materials. Why does Vesperus get involved with *three* cousins? As the aunt explains (speaking for the author), "There's not a single stroke in any of the characters he invented that does not have its meaning. For instance, the character *jian* in *jianyin* [adultery] is composed of three *nü* [woman] characters. Since you three are living together and committing adultery, you must surely appreciate the brilliance of the invention!" Any sophisticated reader must surely appreciate the brilliance of Li Yu's invention.

In his unsentimental attitude toward sex, Li Yu was mocking a popular fiction genre of his time, the "scholar–beauty romance" (*caizi jiaren xiaoshuo*). These short novels typically feature an upright student and an even uprighter teenage girl, both moral paragons with emblematic names, who are made for each other but first must undergo a novel's worth of complications and misunderstandings before the inevitable wedding at the end. Unlike ancient Greek romances, these complications usually don't entail anything as adventurous as pirate abductions or enforced slavery, but instead revolve around social niceties concerning reputation and the regulations in the Confucian *Book of Rites* (*Liji*). Nearly 50 of them survive from the period of roughly 1650 to 1750.

The best and most famous example is the first Chinese novel to be translated into a European language, *The Fortunate Union* (*Haoqiu zhuan*; W–G *Hao-ch'iu chuan*), composed sometime in the middle of the 17th century by the pseudonymous Mingjiaozhongren (A Follower of Orthodox Confucianism). Deftly structured, the novel's first two chapters are devoted to the chivalrous T'ieh Chung-yu (Jade within Iron), a wandering student-poet who rescues a fellow student's fiancée from abduction, and the second two chapters to virtuous Shui Ping-hsin (Water Ice Heart), a Shandong beauty kept busy outwitting the advances of a local playboy named Kuo Ch'i-tsu (Disgrace to His Ancestors) while her father is in exile. Her cleverness at spoiling Kuo's schemes is matched by Jade's bravery: he rescues her from a sticky situation, and after Kuo poisons him, Ice Heart sneaks him back to her home to nurse him back to health. Because they are single they violate Confucian morality by keeping company, but both agree that in this particular case they can be excused from strict propriety. They remain chaste during this interlude—jade and ice are Chinese symbols of

purity—but they worry what others will think and thus keep their distance after Jade's recovery, daring not to profess the love they already have for each other. The remainder of the novel concerns Kuo's continuing attempts to marry Ice and ruin Jade, but thanks to their unbending adherence to proper form, they triumph and are eventually married, partly thanks to the intervention at the end of the student Jade had helped at the beginning of the novel.

What saves this sentimental, didactic tale from tedium and gives *The Fortunate Union* its charm are several humorous scenes, some beautiful poetry, and the fact the two leads are not humorless prigs. Jade occasionally gets drunk and has a temper, and clever Ice has a smart mouth. They recognize each other as superior beings and thus feel justified in defying public opinion during Jade's illness; sounding like a Nietzschean supergirl, Ice haughtily tells her uncle, "the Sage [Confucius] drew up the Rites for the observance of inferior people, not to bind those of higher worth. For the latter, there are Rites beyond the Rites! When Mencius forbade direct meeting between man and woman, he did not seek to establish this as a great crime, but only as an infraction of the lesser rules of courtesy. People with correct hearts have no need of the lesser rules. Those of great virtue can do things impossible to people of no character."[26] But once the crisis is over, these two correct hearts become slaves to the Rites and don't play the "higher worth" card. Even after they marry they delay consummating their union until they demolish every lingering suspicion that anything improper went on while Ice played nurse to Jade. (Ice even submits herself to examinations by three matrons to validate her virginity.) Though one wishes these superior beings could see through the idiocy of their Confucian code —which resembles Islamic fundamentalism regarding relations between the sexes—but given the cultural context, Jade and Ice play their parts well. Mingjiaozhongren is a master of narrative foreplay and strings the reader along just far enough before consummating this fortunate union. In 1761 Thomas Percy published a heavily annotated adaptation of *The Fortunate Union* (too loose to be called a translation) called *Hau Kiou Choann, or The Pleasing History*, which was quickly translated into French, German, and Dutch. (John Francis Davis's more accurate English translation appeared in 1829.) Goethe read the German translation and liked it; he was reminded of

the novels of Samuel Richardson and of his own verse-novel *Hermann and Dorothea* (1797).

Other novels in this genre feature two pairs of scholars and beauties, or a romantic triangle: in the only other example to be translated into English, *The Two Fair Cousins* (*Yu Jiao Li* [the names of the three principal characters], c. 1660?), ascribed to Tianhua Zhang Zhuren, the scholar gets to marry two cousins, but only after following the prescribed rules. "While *Yu Jiao Li* allows some bending of the rules," Margaret Wan observes, "such as the heroine dressing as her 'brother' to offer her own hand to a handsome scholar, the villains are those who violate social conventions by selfishly trying to persuade engaged persons to marry someone else. They relentlessly target the scholar and beauty, who do what they must to avoid these unwelcome matches" (62). This too was admired by Goethe, as well as by Stendhal, Carlyle, Emerson, and Thoreau. It's a shame, however, that these two romances were the first Chinese novels to be translated into Western languages; had any doughty translator introduced one of the four Ming masterpieces—not to mention *The Tower of Myriad Mirrors* or *The Carnal Prayer Mat*—Western audiences would have been astounded, its novelists humbled. Instead, translators and publishers chose safe, familiar fare. There are dozens of other Chinese romances like these, but they sound too formulaic and conventional to warrant further attention.[27]

Situated between these G-rated romances and Li Yu's X-rated parody of them is the domestic realism of *Marriage as Retribution*, aka *The Bonds of Matrimony* (*Xingshi yinyuan zhuan*, literally "A Marriage Fate to Rouse the World"), another 100-chapter meganovel of which, unfortunately, only the first 20 chapters have been translated into English.[28] Nothing is known of the pseudonymous author Xizhou Sheng—for a while the novel was wrongly attributed to Pu Songling, author of the famous *Strange Tales from a Chinese Studio*, who more likely was influenced by it—only that his pen name (meaning Scholar of the Western Chou) indicates he preferred the golden age of Confucius to his own. He apparently began the long novel at the end of the Ming Dynasty and published it some 20 years later, in or around 1661.

Like other Chinese historical novels, *Marriage as Retribution* is a scathing attack on the author's own time projected back onto an earlier era,

in this case the middle of the 15th century. As Tolstoy would do centuries later in *The Kreutzer Sonata*, Xizhou Sheng focuses on the institution of marriage as a warning sign of the times: the bulk of the novel concerns a henpecked husband whose inability (or unwillingness) to tame his shrew is symptomatic of society's ills. Through historical parallels—China fended off a Manchu invasion in 1449—the author implies his country fell to the invading Manchus in 1644 because of this inversion of the Confucian social hierarchy, in which women dominated men and womanish eunuchs dominated the emperor. Though harsh, the novel's purpose is to reform society through ameliorative satire: "tough love" fiction.

The first part of the novel (chaps. 1–22), a kind of lengthy prologue to the rest, concerns the Chou family. The patriarch, Chao Sixiao, is a mediocre schoolteacher who bribes and fakes his way into a lucrative government job, only to be deprived of his office eventually for embezzlement. His son, Chao Yuan, is an arrogant dolt who burns through his father's money, neglects his bad-tempered wife Ji (she was the husband and Yuan the shrewish wife in a previous lifetime), and takes an actress/prostitute named Zhen'ge as his concubine. Out hunting one day with her, he comes upon a seductive woman in white who turns out to be a fox spirit, which Yuan shoots and kills with an arrow. The 1,000-year old vixen takes revenge: first she causes him to fall ill, and then curses him to be reincarnated as the most henpecked husband in literature. After 10 more hellraising years, during which Yuan drives his wife to suicide and robs his father's benefactors, he is caught in bed with the wife of a cobbler named Little Raven; the cuckolded husband first cuts off her head:

> Ch'ao Yüan screamed for help a few times, and then Little Ya sliced off his head. Little Ya tied the two heads together by their hair. He sw[u]ng them over his shoulder, put the knife in his belt as before, picked up his stick and jumped up on the wall. He walked all night to reach the city.
>
> Isn't it romantic to die for love? (19)

That last remark is typical of the sarcastic author, for whom greed, lust, and self-interest drive his society. With Swiftian disgust at the human race, which he often describes with animal imagery, Xizhou populates his novel with thieves, cons, quacks, pimps, whores, fools, blackmailers, adulterers,

incompetents, poisoners, sensual priests, dissolute nuns, disloyal sons, rapacious relatives, thriftless peasants, dishonest shopkeepers, disobedient students, and the ubiquitous crooked officials, with only a few decent characters still committed to traditional Confucian values. One of those few is Yuan's mother, who lives to the age 103 and provides a link between the first 22 chapters and the 78 that follow concerning the next generation.

Yuan is reincarnated as Xichen, the unremarkable son of Di Zongyu, a rich landowner and another decent character. Shortly after, a girl named Sujie is born to a friend of the Di family, and turns out to be the reincarnation of the fox spirit Yuan killed. In addition, Yuan's first wife Ji is reincarnated as the daughter of a silversmith; she will eventually become Xichen's concubine after he marries Sujie, who makes his life a living hell. Sujie goes beyond mere nagging or intimidation to actually torture her husband on several occasions and attempt to kill him, not to mention whipping their servants, disrespecting their relatives (she tries to castrate her father-in-law at one point), setting fire to the house of an enemy, and keeping company with two vicious lesbian nuns. As doltish as Yuan, Xichen puts up with the abuse, especially after he learns that virtually every husband he knows is also henpecked. (Per fox-spirit lore, he is also under her sexual spell; as he tells a fortune-teller who recommends divorce, "But she is so beautiful, and she can be very affectionate with me when we make love, though she changes her attitude right afterwards" [61], trans. Yu.) Sujie is relentless in her abuse until the final chapter, in which she shoots an arrow at her long-suffering husband (just as Yuan shot one at her in chapter 1) and then falls ill while the wounded Xichen has a vision of meeting the king of hell, who tells him he has finally paid off his karmic debt. Sujie then dies, and Xichen lives a long, happy life with his reincarnated first wife/new concubine, tendering her the respect he withheld during their first marriage.

The supernatural elements are merely a traditional frame for a damning portrait of the author's debased society, depicted in ultra realistic detail that rivals that of *The Plum in the Golden Vase*, an obvious model. My bare summary leaves out the wealth of incident in the long novel, which has impressed Sinologists for its verisimilitude. In his superb essay on *Marriage as Retribution,* Andrew H. Plaks gets "the sense of a thoroughgoing realism that is almost cinematographic in detail—notably in

its depiction of examination procedures, official administration and courtroom practice, pawnshops and moneylending, buying and renting of property, provincial travel, disaster relief, and especially prison life."[29] Chi-chen Wang notes the many trial scenes furnish "a better idea of how the judicial process worked in traditional China than can be found in the semiofficial compilations of actual court cases," and agrees with an earlier critic that *Marriage as Retribution* is "an indispensable source book for the student of the social, economic and institutional history of China in the Ming and Ch'ing dynasties."[30] Consequently, the supernaturalism may seems at odds with the novel's dirty realism except that Xizhou Sheng makes it clear he's using it for psychological purposes; though the novel is filled with ghosts, spirit possessions, and dream premonitions, the narrator matter-of-factly explains at one point "The ghosts that Ch'ao Yüan saw were born out of his own guilty heart. They were not real ghosts that came to beat him" (17). The erudite author repeatedly mocks religious and folkloric explanations even as he exploits them for dramatic effect. "Ghosts wax and wane with the state of your conscience," he notes in the poem at the beginning of chapter 11, and the demon-haunted world his characters inhabit is populated by their guilty consciences, a very modern view. An ethical Confucian, the author holds his characters responsible for their fates; all talk of reincarnation and hauntings is merely metaphoric. Chinese magic realism.

Marriage as Retribution is a grim novel with flashes of humor, usually at the expense of his stupid characters (Yuan is conned into buying a cat that allegedly meows sutras), and is narrated in an appropriately vulgar tone. ("If Ch'ao Yüan farts," a character notes, "the old master acts like he's smelling flowers" [16].) There are no explicit sexual scenes, as in *The Plum in the Golden Vase*, though there are gagging descriptions of illness and cannibalism. Xizhou's commitment to realism is valiant; as though responding to the vogue for idealistic scholar–beauty romances—"Here we have a beauty and a genius," says Dr. Yang, mocking Yuan and his whore (3)—he includes a scene in which a painter offers to create three lifelike portraits of Yuan's father. " 'Nevermind making them look exactly like him,' said Ch'ao Yüan. 'Just make him handsome and fair with a nice, long black beard. I want it to look good, not realistic' " (18). Xizhou's portrait of

his society isn't flattering, but it's realistic. To praise a contemporary novelist for being realistic is nothing, but in the 17th-century it was still an act of daring and innovation. Given the novel's huge size—exceeded in Chinese fiction, says Wang, "only by the little-known *Yeh-sou p'u-yen*" (44), which I'll discuss later—it's probably unrealistic to expect an unabridged English translation of *Marriage as Retribution* anytime soon. Maybe in another lifetime.

Published around the same time (1660) is another novel even more indebted to the great *Plum in the Golden Vase*. A historian and dramatist named Ding Yaokang (1599–1669) was convinced not only that people were misreading *PGV* by treating it as pornography rather than a warning against avarice and lust, but that such excesses contributed to the fall of the Ming empire. His 64-chapter *Xu Jing Ping Mei* (Sequel to *The Plum in the Golden Vase*) sought to clarify the original's moral message by dramatizing the karmic retribution visited upon its characters. But because of its association with *PGV*, Qing officials (who likewise stupidly dismissed the original as porn) threw Ding in jail for four months in 1665 and banned his novel. He then produced a shorter, 48-chapter version that softened his criticisms of the ruling Manchus and jettisoned the earlier version's many lectures on religion and folk beliefs. Perhaps to fool the censors who judged a book by its title, Ding entitled this version *Flower Shadows behind the Curtain* (*Gelian huaying*; W–G *Ko-lien hua-ying*). Fritz Kuhn published a complete German translation of it in 1956, but the only English translation is an abridged, 33-chapter version that appeared in 1959. Since this was made from Kuhn's German version, not from the Chinese, it's so far removed from the 64-chapter original of 1660 that it is indeed like gazing at flower shadows behind a curtain, but it will have to do. Nevertheless, it's an engaging work, a panoramic view of a society struggling during a time of war.

In the final chapter of *The Plum in the Golden Vase*, a priest summons the spirits of the characters who died in the novel and sends them to the Eastern Capital to be reincarnated, a ploy that screams "sequel!" And indeed Scoffing Scholar is said to have written his own sequel to *PGV* entitled *Yu Jiao Li* (Jade Charming Plum), which hasn't survived. A contemporary lucky enough to have read it wrote: "In this novel all the characters in *Chin P'ing Mei* re-appear and each person receives the just requital of his

actions, whether reward or punishment. In the sharpness of his brushwork and the wildness and extravagance of the story and its presentation, *Yü Chiao Li* if anything surpasses *Chin P'ing Mei.*"[31] Since *The Plum in the Golden Vase* is one of the greatest novels in world literature, the loss of a sequel that good is a catastrophe. Imagine *Don Quixote* with no part 2.

Ding Yaokang knew *PGV* well (hard to say if he read the sequel) but sometimes gives the characters different fates than those foretold in the older novel, and adjusts the ages of the continuing characters as needed. The main survivors are Hsi-men Ch'ing's principal wife, the pious Moon Lady (Wu Yüeh-ning), and the child born to them a few hours after her husband's death in chapter 79 of *PGV*. Along with her faithful servant Tai Arl (Tai-an)— a much nobler character than his crafty original—the trio wanders through war-torn China trying to avoid the occupying Manchus and local robbers. Their travails, separations, and reunions are spread over the length of the novel and unify the long work, which otherwise consists of episodic accounts of the reincarnations of other characters from *PGV*.

Hsi-men, the philandering protagonist of *PGV*, plays a surprisingly small role in *Flower Shadows*, merely atoning for his past sins as a blind beggar boy who becomes a monk and dies early in the novel at the age of 19. (He comes back as a ghost near the end). On the other hand, P'an Chin-lien—the sex-addicted Golden Lotus of the original—is reborn as the daughter of a soldier, grows up to develop a lesbian crush on another soldier's daughter (the reincarnation of her maid Ch'un-mei, who died of sexual excess in the final chapter of *PGV*), is married off to a loathsome cripple, experiences several heterosexual erotic dreams, then becomes a "stone virgin" physically incapable of vaginal sex, at which point she becomes a nun and is given the name Pure Lotus, the sexual hunger that drove the Golden Lotus of the original smelted away. At the end of this absorbing narrative the author sententiously intones, "And so a child of this world entered into the realm of the eternal, a servant of lust became a virgin of stone" (347).[32] Hsi-men's adulterous sixth wife Ping (the Vase in *The Plum in the Golden Vase*) is reborn as a China doll named Silver Vase, tricked into becoming a courtesan, then is married to a repulsive slob, seduced and abducted by a smooth operator nicknamed Cash and Carry, and eventually hangs herself by her foot bindings. This sensational, novella-length episode concludes

with another accounting of Ding's moral abacus: "And so her debt of guilt, which she had contracted in her previous existence as Lady Ping, by breaking faith with her husband and by robbing him of his fortune, was thereby paid in full" (182).

Like Xizhou Sheng, Ding Yaokang was married to the notion of karma and retribution, incapable of believing people might prosper or suffer because of their own actions, or from mere happenstance. Idealizing the world as a cosmic police state (as deeply religious people tend to do), Ding has a character say, "All your deeds, however much you may try to conceal them, are observed and recorded by a Higher Judge. Barely three feet above your heads, invisible spirits are watching everything you do and report everything at once to the Higher Judge" (372), who rewards or punishes them accordingly—if not in this life, then in the next. In his unexpurgated original version, Ding added: "There are also worm-gods that are called Sanshi shen in the midst of a person's body. They report the person's sins and mistakes to Heaven periodically."[33] Consequently, the novel runs on retribution, reversion, retaliation, and restoration. Good actions are rewarded, evil ones reprimanded, and separated relations reunited; a former brothel ("flower garden") is converted to a religious temple, a sexually active woman reverts to a virgin, the Manchus return north and the Chinese emperor is restored to the throne, and Moon Lady eventually returns to her former home where Hsi-men's wealth is restored to her. It is all a fantasy of how the world *should* work, of course, but it is not the Heavenly Judge who arranged this novel but Ding Yaokang, playing god to create a world more just than the one he and his readers inhabited. This is why Ding abandons Scoffing Scholar's rational Confucianism for populist, supernatural versions of Buddhism and Daoism, which, as Kuhn explains in his introduction, "were notably religions of consolation. In critical times, in times of political distress, when the Confucian teachings, upheld by the Throne, the Government and all the machinery of State, threatened to fail and collapse, the people in despair sought sustenance and comfort in belief in another world and in the alluring concepts of withdrawal from the world propounded by Buddhist and Daoist doctrines" (13).

Despite the novel's didactic nature and the religious moral tacked on to the end of each episode, *Flower Shadows behind the Curtain* is a vivid

account of what life in China must have been like when the Manchus took over. (Like *PGV* it is set in the 12th century but obviously reflects the Manchu invasion in the 17th.) Ding effectively captures the chaos of war and occupation with considerable skill, making up for the novel's simplistic religiosity. In fact, his treatment religion complicates the novel's overt commitment to Buddhism and suggests karma and retribution were useful primarily as plot devices. Like other Chinese writers of the time, he often notes that so-called holy men and women were as licentious as anyone, that robbers often disguised themselves as monks, and that religion usually attracts "superstitious peasant women" (48), not the educated. He mocks Buddhist idolatry, especially its costly statues, and questions the Heavenly Judge's surveillance system, as in these remarks about a burned temple: "The sandalwood statute of Buddha had been wrenched off its pedestal and was also lying on the floor. Only its head was intact, the arms and legs had been hacked off. Alas, why had the divine figure not been able to protect the temple? The grim Veda temple-guards, with their clubs in their fists, had also been powerless to avert the disaster" (210). Near the end of the novel, the hermit Pu Tsing jokes that a charred wooden statue of Buddha should be chopped up for firewood and delivers a short sermon on the history of idolatry, concluding "such likenesses of Buddha are essentially contrary to Buddha and his teaching" (378). Ding's reverence for religion is most questionable during his comic account of how a former palatial brothel becomes the contested site for three religious sects. Buddhists, Daoists, and Confucians vie for the former "flower garden," stage garish ceremonies, incomprehensible sermons, and erotic dances, until they compromise and call it the "Hall of the Three Recognised Teachings," all of which look pretty shabby after Ding puts them through the wringer.

While it's true Ding's digs at religion focus on its superstitious trappings and the hypocrisy of some of its followers, he must have known he was not doing Lord Buddha's work by writing a novel, which could explain some of these tensions. He notes that one of the 10 mortifications of Buddhism is "Indulge not in singing, dancing, theatre or any other kind of play" (233), which would include both the writing and reading of novels. And while the sex is not as graphic and extensive as in *PGV*, there's more of it in Ding's novel than a truly religious writer would allow. (At one point, Ding retains Scoffing Scholar's symbolic equation of sex and money: "Poor Hou had

been so excited by the proximity of a lovely female shape that his purse had been prematurely emptied of all its gold and he had squandered his slender capital long since" [346].) Ding may have begun writing as a preacher but gave in to the temptations of art and ended up a novelist, and unlike poor Hou had gobs of gold to spend, even if he felt guilty about it afterward. "I have been showing off to the world about the grandeur of my writing," he wrote, "but there's none of it that I can take to see *Yanluo* [the judge of hell] on my final day" (Hu, 93). Access to Ding Yaokang's complete novel would be necessary to see if he resolved these conflicts between religion, morality, and art, but even the abridged *Flower Shadows behind the Curtain* deserves to be added to the list of major ~~Chinese~~ novels of the 17th century.

The remainder of the century saw several more sequels—"snakes's legs" the critics called them, meaning they were superfluous—more historical novels, and lots more scholar–beauty romances. Paralleling the trend in popular romance novels of our own time, these became less chaste and more sexually explicit over the decades until they became almost indistinguishable from erotica.[34] For better or for worse, none of these has been deemed worthy of translation.

Nor has anyone Englished *Nüxian waishi* (Unofficial History of a Female Immortal, 1711), a 100-chapter novel by Lü Xiong (1642–1723). An exercise in alternative history, the novel rewrites an early Ming conflict known as the Yongle usurpation (1399–1402), interjecting fantasy and the supernatural into the standard historical account to achieve an outcome more to the author's liking. (*Nüxian waishi* is also one of the earliest Chinese novels to have a preface by the author, rather than by an editor or commentator.) The protagonist is a female rebel named Tang Sai'er, a historical figure around whom legends accrued in succeeding centuries. Lü Xiong makes her the "reincarnation of the moon goddess Change and is therefore named Yue jun (Duchess of the Moon) throughout the novel," writes Altenburger, who goes on to say, "She is supported by several legendary swordswomen and female warriors, who, for their part, have descended from the realm of immortals. . . . She eventually beheads her opponent, the Yongle Emperor, with a flying sword, thus enabling the Jianwen Emperor to resume power. Once she has restored order in the human world, Change alias Sai'er returns to her celestial moon palace"

(198–99, ideographs eliminated). A transgressive work, *Nüxian waishi* contains a devastating critique of neo-Confucian orthodoxy and suggests, according to Altenburger, "that the traditional concept of gender hierarchy does not accord with reality" (203). It caused quite a stir, needless to say, and was later banned.

Probably impossible to translate is Cao Qujing's *Guwangyan* (Preposterous Words, 1730), a 3,000-page sex extravaganza that parodies the conventions of the Chinese shrew narrative, the karmic retribution story, the scholar–beauty romance, and especially pornography, along with some nonfiction forms (biography and travelogue) thrown in, pushing them all to unheard-of extremes. "An encyclopedic collection of sexual acts," one critic reports, "this novel is fraught with details, among other things, of pederasty, bestiality, sadism, incest, orgies, homosexuality, and transsexuality."[35] The language is equally excessive, reveling in puns, wordplay, and jokes in a determined effort to be as outlandish, frivolous, and obscene as possible. Although it includes one romantic couple devoted to love rather than sex, they are a tiny boat on a raging sea of lust. Like Scoffing Scholar before him, Cao Qujing sought to criticize the immoral excesses of his time by exaggerating them to a grotesque degree, resulting in a work that sounds remarkably similar to the novels of the Marquis de Sade.

This period also saw the rise of the detective novel, though in Chinese fiction the role of the gumshoe was played by the district magistrate, a combination of detective, prosecutor, judge, and jury. Detective stories had been popular since the Tang Dynasty—predating by a millennium Edgar Allan Poe, usually credited with inventing the genre—though it wasn't until the 17th century that they grew to novel length. The only translated example I know of is the anonymous *Celebrated Cases of Judge Dee* (*Di gong an*), written sometime in the 18th century, probably by a retired magistrate.[36] Judge Dee (Di Renjie, 629–700) was a statesman noted for his rectitude, and became a magnet for stories set in the Tang Dynasty about an honest magistrate who rights wrongs.

It's a relatively short novel in 30 chapters, and is ingeniously constructed. It begins with a case of double homicide and false accusation, but while working on this case the judge learns of another possible case of murder and begins investigating that one too. The first case is solved by the 18th

chapter, but in the 19th he learns of a possible case of poisoning and begins working on it while stalled on the second. He solves the third case in chapter 23 (the most Sherlock Holmesian of the three) and returns to the second case, which he finally solves in chapter 28. The cases are unrelated, and the author's handling of three separate story-lines is admirable. Most of the detection work is similar to that in modern examples of the genre, though the judge relies on some supernatural clues—from a ghost, a dream, and divination—that remind us we're in the premodern world. (The third and trickiest case involves a beautiful but deadly dame: some elements of the genre are timeless.) The most intriguing part of the novel is a brief interlude in play form that occurs in the center of the novel; three nameless characters come on an empty stage for a dreamlike seduction scene, then disappear. Just as the judge relies on clues to solve crimes, the reader is expected to solve the relevance of this lyric interlude to the rest of the novel. (It has to do with the third case, not yet introduced by that point in the novel.) *Celebrated Cases of Judge Dee* isn't great literature—the characters and prose are flat, the moral pat—but it is well-executed, entertaining, and provides a positive look at China's brutal but meticulous justice system—a system more often subverted in the literary novels of this time.[37]

In the middle of the 18th century, two novels were written that so impressed the critics they were added to the four Ming masterpieces to form the Big Six of classic Chinese fiction. The earlier of the two is *The Scholars* (*Rulin* [W–G *Julin*] *waishi*, literally "Unofficial History of the Forest of Scholars"), composed by Wu Jingzi (1701–54; W–G Wu Ching-tzu) and finished around 1750. At 55 chapters—600 pages in the Yangs' English translation—it's the shortest of the six. Ostensibly it is a mild satire of China's examination system—which, as we've seen, had been the target of jibes by Tung Yueh, Li Yu, and Xizhou Sheng—and the poor quality of "scholars" it produced. The system consisted of a series of PhD-level civil-service exams in which students were tested on their knowledge of the Four Books (*The Great Learning, The Doctrine of the Mean,* the *Analects* of Confucius, and the writings of Mencius) and the Five Classics (*The Book of*

Songs, Classic of History, Book of Changes, Book of Rites, and the *Spring and Autumn Annals*) and their ability to write an "eight-legged" essay on a chosen theme from them. Passing these exams guaranteed social standing and a comfy government job, so most intelligent men studied for the exams, some retaking them all their lives in an attempt to pass. The system was rife with corruption and cheating—some would pay others to take the exam for them, or bribe the examiner, or rely on family influence—and even those who passed honestly did so by suppressing any sign of originality or independent thinking, concentrating instead on parroting the approved commentators on these classics. The predictable result of this faulty system were graduates who were scholars in name only, more intent on careerism and wheeling-dealing than on applying Confucian principles. Those who failed took it hard, for it doomed them to poverty and ostracism. In *The Tower of Myriad Mirrors*, Monkey observes their reaction after the results of an exam are posted (another of Tung Yueh's wonderful lists):

> Soon there was a crowd of thousands and thousands, shouting and yelling, who came to read the placard. At first only a general clamor was heard, but then there were sounds of crying and cursing. Finally the crowd broke up and people walked away one by one. One of them sat vacantly on a stone; one smashed his inkstand made of interlocking tiles; one with his hair hanging like tumbleweed was being chased and swatted by his parents and teachers; one opened the case he clutched to his side, took out his jade lute, burned it, then cried bitterly; one who took a sword from the headboard of his bed and tried to kill himself was stopped by a girl; one, his head bowed absent-mindedly, took out his own essay and read it over and over; one laughed loudly and pounded the table shouting "Fate! Fate! Fate!"; one hung his head and vomited blood; several elders bought spring wine to help ease the depression of another; one chanting poems alone wildly kicked a stone at the end of each line of verse; one wouldn't allow his boyservants to report that his name didn't appear on the list; one had the appearance of being angry and depressed but smiled frostily to himself as if to say, "I deserved it"; one was truly angry and unhappy but forced a smile. (4)

Some of these losers became novelists.

Wu Jingzi's forebears passed these exams and held important offices, but his father turned his back on that life in favor of Confucian self-cultivation. Wu followed in his footsteps, passing a preliminary exam in 1723 but not bothering to take others. After a dissipated period of squandering the family fortune and hanging out with actors and prostitutes in Nanjing, he settled for a life of genteel poverty, writing poems and essays (sometimes for money), and around 1736 began writing his novel about the kinds of "scholars" the exam system was spitting out. Though set in the Ming Dynasty, specifically in the years 1487 to 1595, most of the characters in *The Scholars* are based on people from Wu's own time, two centuries later. (The exam system instituted at the beginning of the Ming Dynasty remained pretty much the same until the end of the Qing Dynasty in 1911.) But Wu goes beyond mocking the civil-service system to lament the decline of Confucian values of integrity and virtuous conduct in his age. As a father in the novel tells his son, "Now, Chao-jen, you have been lucky enough to pass the examination, and may go further later. But fame and fortune are external things after all; it's goodness that really counts."[38]

The Scholars falls into three sections, bookended by a prologue and epilogue. Chapters 2 through 30, occupying about 50 years, features a number of graduates and scholars, successful and otherwise, in a series of vignettes. Unlike most novels, *The Scholars* doesn't focus on one individual or family; instead, it's like a long-distance relay race; a protagonist or two will dominate a few chapters, then pass the narrative baton on to a hitherto minor character, who will then amble with it for a few chapters before passing it on to the next protagonist. They are unified not by family but by their relationship to the exam system, and while an occasional character from an early chapter might reappear later, most are left behind as the author dramatizes a new generation's struggle with the system. This is the first of the novel's many innovations, and one of its challenges: there are about 60 principal characters and twice as many minor ones to keep track of over a century's time, and you never know which bystander in one chapter will emerge as the protagonist of the next. The unpredictable structure and casting are emblematic, and later Qinq novelists were the first to applaud Wu's marriage of form and content: "its episodic structure," Shang Wei explains, "which permits a broad coverage of various and often unrelated

social circles and locales, fueled their *fin-de-siècle* imagination with the vision of a shattered world that has lost its center of gravity and cohesion."[39] The first section comes to a climax of sorts when a man named Tu Shen-ching, who is not too fond of the ladies—"I assure you, they affect me so painfully, I can smell a woman three rooms away!"—sponsors a contest for actors who specialize in women's roles, held in a pavilion on Carefree Lake. A gay old time is had by all.

In marked contrast, chapters 31–37 deal with Tu's cousin Shao-ching, "a true gentleman of the old school" (31), whom critics consider an autobiographical portrait of Wu himself. Generous to a fault, he gives his money away to anyone who asks, and keeps company not with transvestite actors but with Dr. Yu Yu-teh, the most virtuous Confucian in the novel. In chapter 37 they establish a temple in honor of Tai Po, a legendary Confucian sage who forsook wealth and fame for a simpler life. Chapters 38–54 feature another cavalcade of characters, not all of them scholars, but each supplying a case study in applied ethics, most falling short of Confucian ideals. How short? chapter 54 concludes with an ugly squabble between a pimp and his ho.

In the prefatory first chapter, set in the 14th century, the author states on the first page that most people waste their lives pursuing "riches, rank, success, and fame," then introduces a simple man named Wang Mien to serve as his ideal. (Wang was a historic figure who died in 1359.) He's modest, self-taught, and turns down an opportunity for political office to live and die as a hermit instead. Shown the new decree establishing the examination system, he warns, "These rules are not good. Future candidates, knowing there is an easy way to high position, will look down on real scholarship and correct behaviour." Wu then parodies the opening chapter of *The Water Margin* as Wang watches the stars of the constellation "The Scholars" fall to the earth and predicts, "The stars have been sent down to maintain the literary tradition. But we shan't live to see it" (1). But Wu saw it, and after dramatizing for nearly 600 pages how scholars degraded the literary tradition, he adds an epilogue set in 1595, introducing us to four more exemplary characters—a calligrapher, a go player, a painter, and a musician—who live modest lives in the manner of Wang Mien (and Wu himself).[40] The painter and a neighbor decide to visit the Confucian

temple erected some 50 years earlier by virtuous Tu Shao-ching and Yu Yu-teh, only to find "the main hall of Tai Po's temple with the front half of the roof caving in. Five or six children were playing football beside the double gate, one half of which had fallen to the ground. Going in, they came upon three or four old women, who were picking shepherd's purse in the temple courtyard. All the lattice-work in the hall had disappeared, and the five buildings at the back were completely stripped—not even a floor plank was left" (55). After a few more quiet, mournful pages, the novel ends.[41]

But *The Scholars* is not a caustic condemnation of society along the lines of *The Plum in the Golden Vase* or *Marriage as Retribution*. Wu's "Litter of Literati" (as the title might be translated) and provincial posers make good copy, and the changes in cast every few chapters resemble a satiric stage revue—perhaps something Wu retained from his wasted youth among actors. (He used to write lyrics for their shows.) The novel is filled with comic incidents, sarcastic dialogue, and slapstick humor: a marriage ceremony is disrupted when a rat falls from the rafters into a bowl of soup, splashing the groom, followed a little while later by an airborne boot (propelled by a cook trying to kick some dogs), which likewise lands in soup; rubes embarrass themselves in the big city; various clever cons are pulled on people, one involving a pig's head in a sack; a man is tricked into marrying a shrew, who in turn punishes the woman who arranged it by smearing her face with human feces; Tu Shen-ching is tricked into an assignation with an allegedly pretty Daoist priest who turns out to be a fat, 50-year-old slob, and when the prankster later relates this story to others, it "made them laugh so violently that they nearly choked" (33)—the response Wu hoped to get from his reader. There's no doubting Wu's serious concern with the decay in Confucian values and true scholarship, but *The Scholars* is a satire, not a sermon.

In addition to exposing the mundane foibles of human nature, Wu mocks the superstitious beliefs still prevalent in China in his time (and even today). An editor meets a tall, white-bearded man whom he takes at first to be a Daoist immortal, but as the next chapter title wryly informs us, "Ma Chun-shang attends the funeral of an immortal" (15), for it turns out the latter was merely a conman/poet who had a manuscript he wanted to publish.[42] We're told of two scholars born on the same day and at the same hour, "yet their

fortunes have been totally different—they have nothing at all in common!" a character exclaims. "This shows that astrology and horoscopy are unreliable" (17). Feng shui and fortune-telling are also exposed as scams, and an anecdote about a scheming monk who claims a cow was his father in a previous lifetime ridicules both Buddhism and transmigration in one comic swoop. But Wu's attitude toward superstition/religion is puckish, not vicious, and he knows that there is only one true path to immortality: "You want several good scholars to write about your adventures," advices a scholar named Wu Shu, "for their works will confer immortality on your loyal deeds and rescue them from oblivion" (40).

Equally enlightened is Wu's attitude toward women, who were of course banned from taking the civil-service exams.[43] Chapter 11 features a wife better qualified to take them than her dilettantish husband is, and other chapters feature women whose dedication to filial piety puts the male characters to shame. When Tu Shao-ching goes for a walk with his wife, holding her hand and roaring with laughter, everyone is "shocked and amazed" (33), for few men treated their wives as equals in public in those days. One scholar's daughter named Shen Chiung-chih refuses to become a salt-merchant's concubine (she thought she was slated to be his principal wife), so she runs away to Nanjing where she plans to sell her poems and needlework at Lucky Crossing Bridge. This independent young bohemian is of course taunted by some and assumed to be a prostitute. "Gaudily dressed" and wearing "her hair in the style of low-class women" (41), Chiung-chih harasses a crowd of ruffians, then discovers there's a warrant out for her arrest (instigated by the salt-merchant), faces down a magistrate, punches out two guards—and then disappointingly passes the narrative baton on to a pair of real prostitutes and isn't seen again. Other women behave as badly as men: an adventuress in chapter 54 uses sex to rob gullible men, and the novel ends with the story of Pin-niang, a talented but greedy courtesan whose customers are the "scholars" of Wu's title.[44]

The relay-race narrative structure isn't the only challenge for the first-time reader of *The Scholars*. Traditional Chinese criticism has a phrase meaning "directly narrating the incident itself without expressing one's own judgment," used often by one early commentator on *The Scholars.*[45] Wu abandoned the traditional storyteller role of most Chinese narrators to

simply relate what happens without authorial comment, relying on the reader to size up his characters based on what they do and say—typical of a modern novel, but a daring innovation on Wu's part. But much of what they do and say is so culture-specific that a reader almost feels it necessary to bone up first on the Four Books and Five Classics to measure the characters' Confucian quotient. In his fine mongraph *Wu Ching-tzu*, Timothy Wong quotes a brief dialogue between two scholars discussing the ethics of a bribe, then spends two and a half pages explicating their various errors of fact to reveal the depth of their stupid pedantry (55–57), which would have been apparent to Wu's educated readers but not to us. (In this regard *The Scholars* resembles novels that belong to the Western tradition of learned wit.) While most of Wu's scholars mangle and misuse their spotty education, his stand-in Tu Shao-ching demonstrates the proper use of scholarship in chapter 34 when he proposes new interpretations of two poems in *The Book of Songs*—both of which, not uncoincidentally, support his enlightened view of women.

It is for these reasons scholars with the necessary background in Chinese civilization rate Wu's novel higher than a first-time Western reader might. C. T. Hsia, for example, praises *The Scholars* "for its revolutionary importance in stylistic and technical innovation and for the enormous influence it has exerted on the development of the Chinese novel," specifically in avoiding the poetic discourse and clichés of earlier novels, in attempting "to liberate the novel from the fetters of popular religion," in providing "the first satiric novel consciously written from the Confucian point of view," for deploying "a revolutionary technique in character portrayal," for his sympathetic treatment of "such lowly people as actors, prostitutes, and concubines" (which makes him "the first true humanitarian among Chinese novelists"), and for being "the first Chinese novelist to exhibit an introspective turn of mind."[46]

All of these innovations give *The Scholars* a modernist feel. I was in the middle of reading it when I was asked to write a preface to a forthcoming Chinese translation of William Gaddis's satiric novel *J R* (1975); struck by the similarities, I concluded my piece by suggesting Chinese readers of *J R* might be reminded of their Qing classic: Like Wu Jingzi, Gaddis states his theme on the first page (money), features a large cast of characters from all

levels of society pursuing what Wu identifies on *his* first page as "riches, rank, success and fame" through multiple story-lines, abstains from authorial comment, relies heavily on the vernacular, and combines outrageous comedy with a mournful sense of civilization going to the dogs. Both authors also shared the idealistic hope that by pointing out society's faults, society could reform itself, but both were smart enough to know that wasn't going to happen. Not in 18th-century China, not in 20th-century America.

The trajectory of Wu Jingzi's life—wealthy upbringing, descent into poverty, final years spent writing a long novel published decades after his death—is remarkably similar to that of his younger contemporary Cao Xueqin (W–G Tsao Hsueh-chin, 1715?–63), author of the greatest novel in Chinese literature. (That most of you have to read the next sentence to learn what that is speaks volumes about our cultural provincialism.) *A Dream of Red Mansions* (*Honglou meng*), aka *The Story of the Stone* (*Shitouji*), is a massive, 120-chapter novel whose place in Chinese culture is comparable, one Western critic suggests, to "a work with the critical cachet of James Joyce's *Ulysses* and the popular appeal of Margaret Mitchell's *Gone with the Wind*—and twice as long as the two combined."[47] Or imagine a parallel universe where everyone reads Proust's *In Search of Lost Time*, the Western novel that most closely resembles *A Dream of Red Mansions* in size and sophistication.

The publication history of Cao's novel is chaotic because, like Proust, he died while still revising it, leaving behind masses of manuscripts in various states of revision. (Coincidentally, they both died at about the same age, around 50.) The manuscript tradition suggests Cao finished writing the novel in 1754 after a decade's work, and that he spent the next nine years revising and expanding it. During that time, family and friends helped with preparing his manuscripts (and sometimes hindered by losing them); two in particular, known by their pseudonyms Red Inkstone (Zhiyan zhai) and Odd Tablet (Jihu sou, or "The Old Crock"), copied and commented on the work in progress, making suggestions that Cao incorporated into his endless revisions. After Cao died in 1763 and Red Inkstone a few years later, it fell to Odd Tablet to prepare an authorized edition. (Bootlegs had already begun to appear based on circulating manuscripts.) The annotated version he

brought out near the end of that decade was entitled *The Story of the Stone* but broke off after 80 chapters, though there were rumors of 120. Intrigued, a publisher named Cheng Weiyan spent much of the 1780s assembling what appeared to be the missing 40 chapters from booksellers and antiquarians, then asked his friend Gao E (1763–1816) to put them in order and harmonize them with the earlier 80 chapters. Their 120-chapter edition was published in January 1792 with the more evocative title *A Dream of Red Mansions*, one of a half-dozen titles Cao kicked around. Some early readers suspected that the concluding 40 chapters were a forgery on their part, a view held by some critics to this day. But over the last century others have come to believe their conclusion resembles what Cao must have left behind. There's evidence of much editorial tampering throughout, beginning with Odd Tablet in the 1760s, but many have found the style of the final 40 chapters consistent with that of the first 80; in the 1980s a young critic did a computer-assisted statistical analysis of the 120-chapter text and concluded that it "is substantially a work of single authorship."[48] Ten years later, however, Hsiao-jung Yu concluded, from the difference in the use of interrogatives and the absence in the last 40 chapters of Cao's native Nanjing dialect, that the novel is a work of dual authorship. Thus the complete novel as we now have it "is a heavily-edited, somewhat imperfect amalgam of several different versions," as one of Cao's English translators admits, "the *disiecta membra* [scattered remains] of several different novels which no amount of editing can ever quite successfully reconcile one with another. . . . [Nevertheless] even in its unfinished and imperfect state his novel has had the power to entrance generations of readers and hold them in lifelong thrall."[49]

About the novel's title(s): In the dreamlike chapter 1, a heady mix of mythology, allegory, and metafiction, we are told the novel had different names at different stages: *The Story of the Stone, The Tale of Brother Amor, A Mirror for the Romantic, A Dream of Red Mansions,* and *The Twelve Beauties of Jinling* (an old name for Nanjing). The earliest English translations were entitled *The Dream of the Red Chamber*, but when David Hawkes published the first volume of his definitive translation in 1973, he went with *The Story of the Stone.* But in China (and elsewhere in translation), the title most often used means *A Dream of Red Mansions*,

which is the title the Yangs chose for their English translation of 1978, and which I prefer even though I'll mostly be quoting the superior Hawkes/Minford version.[50] For red is the primary color of the novel—in fact the specialized study of Cao's work is called Redology (*Hongxue*)—and the dream element is crucial. As to the literal meaning of *Honglou meng*, Hawkes explains in his introduction: "In old China storeyed buildings with red-plastered outer walls—this is the literal meaning of '*hong lou*'—were a sign of opulence and grandeur. . . . But '*hong lou*' early acquired another, more specialized meaning. It came to be used specifically of the dwellings of rich men's daughters, or, by extension, of the daughters themselves" (1:19). One playfully pedantic critic says a "pseudo-philological translation might be: *Dreams in the Vermillion Red Second Story Loft Building Gynaeceum,*"[51] which might work in Kazakhstan if nowhere else. But for this richly symbolic novel I think it's important to retain "dream," "red," and plural "mansions" (not the singular "chamber" of older translations), so *A Dream of Red Mansions* it is (acronymed *DRM* henceforth).

Now: let's quickly deal with the novel's *Gone with the Wind* appeal to get to the more interesting *Ulysses* parallel.

DRM is a romantic tragedy set against the decline of an aristocratic Beijing family in the early 18th century, and the coming-of-age story of a rather strange boy. Shortly after attaining puberty, the pampered heir Jia Bao-yu meets his cousin Lin Dai-yu, a smart, delicate orphan two years younger;[52] they recognize each other as soul-mates fated to be in love, though they spend most of their time bickering. (Like some women, Dai-yu not only is regularly disappointed that Bao-yu doesn't have the psychic ability to read her mind and anticipate how she will react to the nuances of words and actions, but also possesses an elephantine memory for past lapses.) Dai-yu is only one of many girl cousins and maids with whom the effeminate Bao-yu spends all his time, a refined existence mostly spent in the Jia family's elaborate garden, where the kids have their own separate cottages. Around age 17 Bao-yu is tricked by his family into marrying a different cousin—the sensible Confucian conformist Bao-chai—and on their wedding night, Dai-yu dies from consumption, convinced Bao-yu has betrayed her and cursing him with her dying breath. This sends Bao-yu into

a catatonic stupor and long illness, and even after he recovers he's never quite the same. Meanwhile, his family is experiencing financial problems and falls under Imperial disfavor, losing many of its assets. Bao-yu's female playmates begin dispersing: some die, or marry, one takes take the veil, and one (in a sensational chapter) is kidnapped and raped. Reluctantly fulfilling his filial duties, Bao-yu impregnates his wife and passes the civil-service exam with distinction—providing the family with an heir and restoring some of its reputation—but then disappears to become a Buddhist monk, convinced that love and social success are illusory.

Although the pace is glacial by Western standards and the huge cast (some 500 characters) is hard to keep track of, *DRM* is an enchanting read. The principal characters are well-drawn, the conflicts of a large family realistically depicted, the sumptuous surroundings lovingly described, and there are enough plot twists and surprises to keep the reader turning its hundreds and hundreds of pages. It's funny in parts, and includes a wide range of characters from the emperor down to thieves and actors; women dominate the novel—they are smarter and more talented than most of the men—and the author's empathy and insights into female psychology are deep and almost unprecedented. (It is perhaps the greatest feminist novel written by a man.) Bao-yu and the girls display all the charm and exuberance of precocious teens, along with the immaturity that attends grappling with first love. Bao-yu, like most boys that age, isn't as emotionally mature as the girls, to their exasperation; Dai-yu is as touchy as a tigress with a toothache, and often comes across as "a self-centered neurotic who courts self-destruction," as Hsia huffs.[53] (Nowadays, Dai-yu would be a brainy goth girl with serious self-esteem issues.) It's easy to see why the novel was popular in China from the start; as Shi Changyu notes in his introduction to the Yangs' translation, in a feudal society where marriages were arranged by family elders with no regard for the children's personal feelings, "the novel had a particularly profound effect on young people, with young women weeping, swooning and being driven almost to distraction while reading the poignant story of Bao-yu and Dai-yu. The tragedy of *A Dream of Red Mansions* resonated in the hearts of young people in feudal society . . . with the result that the guardians of feudal morality regarded the novel with horror and several times banned it or

destroyed copies" (1:12). (It's all very chaste, though; Bao-yu and Dai-yu never even kiss.) Although the events of the novel are largely confined to the domestic sphere and not set against an important historical backdrop (like the Civil War in *Gone with the Wind*), *DRM* is a sweeping romantic saga whose continued popularity in China is as well-deserved and understandable as that in this country for Margaret Mitchell's novel (and its epic movie version).

Just as Joyce adapted the myth of Ulysses' return to Ithaca to structure his huge novel, Cao Xueqin encloses his story within an elaborate Buddhist fairy tale. (Bear with me on this.) The novel opens in the mythic past as the mother goddess Nu Wa molded 36,501 building stones to repair a breach in the sky; only 36,500 are needed for the job (the number of days in a century), so she discards the extra stone on Greensickness Peak.[54] Like the divine stone at the beginning of *The Journey to the West*, this stone becomes sentient and self-conscious: convinced it was rejected because of its unworthiness, the stone shrinks to the size of a pendant. It is discovered by a lame Buddhist monk and a scabby Daoist priest, two rather disreputable pimps for enlightenment who will turn up periodically throughout the novel. Recognizing its potential, the monk incarnates the stone as an aristocratic boy and sends him off to experience the human world. "Countless aeons" later, another Daoist whose name the English translator Latinizes Vanitas (Kongkong daoren, or "Reverend Void") comes across a stone inscribed with a lengthy narrative: *The Story of the Stone*, which we are about to read. He reads it and—sounding like a modern editor—tells the stone that while this story "contains matter of sufficient interest to merit publication . . . I cannot see that it would make a very remarkable book" (1). Like any author defending his work, the stone accuses Vanitas of reading it superficially and explains his motives; Vanitas then rereads it and discovers that it is indeed remarkable and copies it out to find a publisher. This is Cao's hint to readers that while his novel may appear to be merely a novel about "a number of females, conspicuous, if at all, only for their passion or folly or for some trifling talent or insignificant virtue" (as Vanitas complained after his first reading), its realism and psychological acuity make it far superior to conventional fiction. (Can a novel be called realistic that opens with a Chinese goddess creating a talking stone? That's one of

the many paradoxes of this subtle work.) The stone also hints this will be a work of metafiction; novels that contain an account of their origin are invariably about the process of literary creation.

The novel then begins again, in 18th-century Suzhou, by introducing a scholar named Zhen Shi-yin; he promptly falls asleep, and in the first of the novel's many spectacular dream sequences he is approached by the Buddhist monk and Daoist priest, who provide the remainder of the novel's backstory. Before the stone entered the human world, he attended the fairy Disenchantment at her Court of Sunset Glow. Out walking one day, the stone came across the beautiful Crimson Pearl Flower, which he brought to life with daily administrations of dew. The flower takes the form of an ethereal girl, who is so grateful to the stone that she decides to repay him not with dew but with "the tears shed during the whole of a mortal lifetime if he and I were ever to be reborn as humans in the world below" (1). Stone and flower will become Bao-yu and Dai-yu, fated soul-mates, and she will repay her "debt of tears" by dying young. (The fairytale logic here is a little hard to follow.) The stone is compressed to a piece of "precious jade" (the literal meaning of Bao-yu) and is found on the tongue of the baby born (reincarnated) into the Jia family circa 1715. It is inscribed with this couplet:

> Truth becomes fiction when the fiction's true;
> Real becomes not-real where the unreal's real.

—a reference to the "unreal" nature of the "real" world (per unworldy Buddhism) but also to the way fiction can be more real (truthful, insightful) than nonfiction when the fiction's true (based on real events, as this novel was). At this point, Shi-yin awakes and we are once again back in the "real" world of our "unreal" novel.

Only halfway through the first chapter, the reader's head is spinning with these mythic schemes and mystifying paradoxes, so it's fortunate the next few chapters continue in a more realistic vein. But in the dazzling chapter 5 we return to "The Land of Illusion" via another extended dream sequence. Now at the age of puberty, Bao-yu becomes drowsy at a party and takes a nap in the bed of a flirty relative, a sexy young wife named Qin Ke-qing (Qin-shi to her friends). In a dream, Bao-yu follows the flirt to a feminine

realm where he (re)encounters the fairy Disenchantment: “My business is with the romantic passions, love-debts, girlish heartbreaks and male philandering of your dust-stained, human world,” she tells him sadly (5). A personification of the illusion (or impossibility) of true love, Disenchantment periodically sends the souls of girls “down into the world to take part in the great illusion of life” (1), after which they return to her, brokenhearted but enlightened. Taking Bao-yu to her palace—though Disenchantment preaches the Buddhist ideal of nonattachment, her Land of Illusion is more like a Heartbreak Hotel for women—she allows him to look through “registers in which are recorded the past, present and future of girls from all over the world,” but since these are written in the form of enigmatic poems, he fails to make any sense of them. (He will later; as with Vanitas’s first encounter with the inscribed stone, Cao’s novel is a tutorial on how to read complex literature.) Bao-yu is then introduced to a number of fairy maidens, a dozen of whom perform an oratorio called “A Dream of Red Mansions,” which foretells the sad fates of his girl-companions in waking life, but again the allegorical lyrics are too baffling for him to understand. To cure him of desire (*qing*: more broadly, attachment to the sensual world), Disenchantment then leads our boy to a bedroom occupied by a fairy girl: “Her rose-fresh beauty reminded him strongly of Bao-chai, but there was also something about her of Dai-yu’s delicate charm” (5); that is, she combines the best features of the two later rivals for his affections, but this fairy also happens to be named Ke-qing, same as the woman whose bed Bao-yu is dreaming in. Disenchantment gives Bao-yu some sex tips and pushes him at the compliant fairy. Coy Cao then tell us: “Dazed and confused, Bao-yu nevertheless proceeded to follow out the instructions that Disenchantment had given him, which led him by predictable stages to that act which boys and girls perform together—and which is not my intention to give a full account of here” (5).[55] In “real” life, of course, what we have here is a boy at puberty experiencing his first wet dream, but in the Buddhist scheme of things, this is supposed to enlighten him to the emptiness of the sensual world. Fat chance. After Bao wakes, his maid Aroma notices his semen-stained trousers, much to his embarrassment, but he quickly gets over it and repeats the dreamy experience with her. A year or two older than Bao-yu, Aroma thus becomes his “chamber-wife,” but

though she continues to serve him as a maid in the years that follow, there's no further mention of sex between them.

The novel remains mostly in the material world thereafter, though occasional references to the Buddhist, the Daoist, and to Disenchantment remind us of the metaphysical superstructure behind the realistic action. There is also extensive use of mirrors and doubling to reinforce the difficulty of distinguishing between the real and unreal. In a daring move, Cao even provides our Jia Bao-yu of Beijing with a double named Zhen Bao-yu of Nanjing, whom he first meets in a dream before meeting him in real life, and who later becomes the model citizen our Bao will never be. (*Zhen* means "true" while *jia* means "false," complicating matters further).

As the novel slowly progresses, it alternates between the rose-colored world of Bao-yu and the girls in their pleasure garden (modeled after the Land of Illusion) and the more conflicted world of the grownups next door in their red mansions. The kids' dreamy existence is often punctuated with real dreams that are so insightfully symbolic that Cao seems to "have anticipated the findings of modern psychology," as Hsia notes (275).[56] The dream sequence in the 5th chapter is elegantly bookended by another one in the 5th chapter from the end (116), after the unhappily married Bao-yu is reminded of his previous existence as a stone and finally grasps the point Disenchantment had been trying to make. In a deep swoon, Bao-yu returns to the fairy realm, rereads the registers with greater comprehension, and re-encounters Dai-yu as a "Fairy Plant." (Some of this may sound silly, but it is enchanting and even heartrending to read, believe me.) Upon waking, he is filled with a new resolve to discharge his social duties and detach himself from the world, aided by the return of the Buddhist monk. And in the concluding chapter 120, after the reader watches the 19-year-old Bao-yu disappear into a snowstorm, a full-blown mystic, we meet again the dreaming scholar Zhen Shi-yin from chapter 1, who summarizes this grand allegory of the "Magic Stone" and "Fairy Flower," and we finally return to Greensickness Peak in the Land of Illusion, where Vanitas notices that new material has been added to the stone he had read earlier. Once again he ventures into the human world to find a publisher for the completed work, and in a shack in the suburbs of Beijing, he comes upon "a certain Mr Cao Xue-qin," who genially agrees to see what he can do with it.

Just as Joyce didn't need to believe in the historicity of the story of Ulysses to find it useful as an organizing structure, Cao didn't necessarily believe in the Buddhist quest for enlightenment and possibly adapted it only as a recognizable course someone at odds with conventional society might take, a parable for a more private quest. As Plaks puts it, *DRM* "is at base an autobiographical exercise in the purgation of guilt: reliving the tragic fall of a proud family very much like his own, and shedding tears of remorse over his wasted years of youthful self-indulgence" (113). Like Bao-yu, Cao Xueqin was born into a wealthy family that fell apart in 1728 when its Nanjing estates were confiscated by the throne. Cao was 13 at the time—Bao's age through much of the novel—and evidently had to stay with relatives in Beijing, never amounting to much after that. In later life he lived in abject poverty, barely surviving by selling rock-paintings and spending what little money he earned on wine. He certainly never became a Buddhist monk like Bao.[57] Instead he led a bohemian life writing poetry, dabbling in theater, reading history books, and entertaining friends with witty talk: "discoursing of high, noble things while one hand hunts for lice," as one of his friends put it.[58] But he never forgot his privileged childhood, nor the charming girls he was privileged to spend it with. In one manuscript tradition, followed by the Yangs for their translation, the novel begins with this prefatory account of how *DRM* was written:

> In writing this story of the Stone the author wanted to record certain of his past dreams and illusions, but he tried to hide the true facts of his experience by using the allegory of the jade of "Spiritual Understanding." Hence his recourse to names like Zhen Shiyin [meaning "true facts concealed"]. But what are the events recorded in this book, and who are the characters? About this he said:
>
> "In this busy, dusty world, having accomplished nothing, I suddenly recalled all the girls I had known, considering each in turn, and it dawned on me that all of them surpassed me in behaviour and understanding; that I, shameful to say, for all my masculine dignity, fell short of the gentler sex. But since this could never be remedied, it was no use regretting it. There was really nothing to be done.

> “I decided then to make known to all how I, though dressed in silks and delicately nurtured thanks to the Imperial favour and my ancestors’ virtue, had nevertheless ignored the kindly guidance of my elders as well as the good advice of teachers and friends, with the result that I had wasted half my life and not acquired a single skill. But no matter how unforgivable my crimes, I must not let all the lovely girls I have known pass into oblivion through my wickedness or my desire to hide my shortcomings.
>
> “Though my home is now a thatched cottage with matting windows, earthen stove and rope-bed, this shall not stop me from laying bare my heart. . . . Though I have little learning or literary talent, what does it matter if I tell a tale in rustic language to leave a record of all those lovely girls. This should divert readers too and help distract them from their cares.” (1:1–2)

That is, Cao’s motive was not to write a Buddhist “Intimations of Immortality,” but to immortalize the lovely girls he had known as a youngster, celebrating them when they were still girls and not yet women. Writing in the 1960s, Hsia noted that Bao-yu’s (and Cao’s) “secret wish is not unlike that of a much-admired adolescent hero in recent American fiction: to be a catcher in the rye and rescue all the lovely maidens from the brink of custom and sensuality” (267). Throughout *DRM*, older women are portrayed as unlovely creatures, either worn-down and dispirited, or ambitious and conniving, or miserably married, or greedy, licentious, selfish, petty, or coarse. Near the middle of the novel Bao-yu is quoted as having once said, “A girl before she marries is like a priceless pearl, but once she marries the pearl loses its lustre and develops all sorts of disagreeable flaws, and by the time she’s an old woman, she’s no longer like a pearl at all, more like a boiled fish’s eye” (59), and among the novel’s largely female cast there are few women over 18 who don’t justify his observation. In addition to Salinger’s Holden Caulfield, Bao/Cao sounds like Peter Pan, scornful of adulthood, or better yet like Lewis Carroll, who lost interest in his girl chums once they grew up and got married. “People *had* to marry, of course,” Bao-yu realizes: “they had to reproduce their kind. But what a way for a lovely young girl to end!” (58). Given the way the author’s life turned out, it’s understandable the adult Cao would want to

preserve that happy time when his family was still flush, to freeze himself at the age of 13 when he gloried "in the shadow of young girls in flower" (as the title of the second volume of Proust's novel literally translates). Cao/Bao and the girls are like the figures immortalized on Keats's Grecian urn,

> Forever warm and still to be enjoyed,
> Forever panting and forever young.

Call his attitude naive, romantic, nostalgic, immature, even misogynistic, it's an attitude that perhaps men hold more often than women. Alexander Theroux complains in *Laura Warholic* that women "unidealistically leave their girlhood behind them without so much as a single glance back, whereas men fondly, even if fatuously, keep looking back at the vanishing point and wondering whither the snows of yesteryear" (187). Call this attitude what you will, but it resulted in one of the loveliest paeans to girlhood ever written.

As he set out to redeem his wasted life by rescuing from oblivion the girls of his youth, Cao Xueqin also decided to redeem the Chinese novel from conventionality. When Vanitas criticizes the stone's story for lacking a historical setting and "examples of moral grandeur among its characters—no statesmanship, no social message of any kind"—that is, for not resembling the typical Chinese novel—the insulted stone blasts him for being "obtuse" and defends his modern innovations: "In refusing to make use of that stale old convention [a historical setting] and telling my *Story of the Stone* exactly as it occurred, it seems to me that, far from *depriving* it of anything, I have given it a freshness those other books do not have" (1). Indeed, the novel's modern setting, psychological depth, confessional mode, and metafictional self-consciousness are revolutionary. The stone goes on to deliver a page-long denunciation of conventional fiction—trashy historical novels, erotica, and especially the popular scholar–beauty romances—and claims his novel is more realistic, features round characters rather than flat stereotypes, and avoids "the stilted, bombastic language" of most novels. His objections to conventional novels are seconded by the matriarch of the novel, Grandmother Jia. In chapter 51 she mocks the

clichéd plots of most plays and novels and castigates their authors for the "underlying falseness" of their stories:

> "There's always a reason for it," the old lady went on. "In some cases it's because the writer is envious of people so much better off than himself, or disappointed because he has tried to obtain their patronage and failed, and deliberately portrays them in this unfavourable light as a means of getting his own back on them. In other cases the writers have been corrupted by reading this sort of stuff before they begin to write any themselves, and, though totally ignorant of what life in educated, aristocratic families is really like, portray their heroines in this way simply because everyone else does so and they think it will please their readers. I ask you now, never mind *very* grand families like the ones they pretend to be writing about, even in average well-to-do families like ours when do you ever hear of such carryings-on? It's a wonder their jaws don't drop off, telling such dreadful lies!" (54)

The girls Cao vowed to memorialize deserved something better than this, as do intelligent readers, and he found better models in classic plays, specifically Wang Shifu's paradigm-shifting *Story of the Western Wing* (*Xixiang ji*, c. 1300), a lively romantic comedy that broke many of the rules of Chinese dramaturgy, and Tang Xianzu's *Peony Pavilion* (*Mudan ting*, 1598), a supernatural dream-play, which like *The Western Wing* is much longer and more complex than most Chinese plays. Cao pays tribute to both in chapter 23 of his novel: when Bao-yu's servant notices his young master is bored, he visits a book-stall and returns with some erotic novels and playbooks. Like any 13-year-boy, Bao is momentarily startled by the porn, but abandons them for *The Western Wing*, which Dai-yu catches him reading. (During this period Bao-yu should be studying the Confucian classics, not reading novels and plays—girly stuff.) Asked to see his book, Bao warns (as though *it* were porn):

> " . . . if I do let you look, you must promise not to tell anyone. It's marvellous stuff. Once you start reading it, you'll even stop wanting to eat!"

He handed the book to her, and Dai-yu put down her things and looked. The more she read, the more she liked it, and before very long she had read several acts. She felt the power of the words and their lingering fragrance. Long after she had finished reading, when she had laid down the book and was sitting there rapt and silent, the lines continued to ring on in her head.

"Well," said Bao-yu, "is it good?"

Dai-yu smiled and nodded.

Later in the same chapter, Dai-yu overhears the Jia family's troupe of child actresses rehearsing a scene from *The Peony Pavilion* and marvels "there is good poetry even in plays. What a pity most people think of them only as entertainment" (23). The novel is filled with critical discussions of poetry, plays, novels, operas, landscaping, and painting: one of Bao's girl friends is engaged in a large-scale painting of their garden, an analog for the novel itself. "Through it all," Plaks notes (reminding us again of *Ulysses*), "we also discern the familiar voice of the learned man of letters flaunting his erudition and his urbane wit in a whole series of parodies, allusions and special effects—thereby giving a knowing wink to the connoisseurs of literati fiction who are accustomed to reading between the lines of fictional narrative, as much for the display of learning and literary refinement as for the orchestration of plot, character and sentiment" (119). And through it all the author makes clear distinctions between innovative art (like his) and conventional entertainment, leaving no doubt which side he's on.

There is some doubt, however, which side he's on sexually.[59] While Chinese readers consider Bao-yu and Dai-yu an archetypal romantic couple, jaded Western readers are apt to be reminded less of Romeo and Juliet than of Marcel and Albertine, knowing the latter was a beard for Proust's love for *Albert* Nahmias and especially Alfred Agostinelli. Cao sows examples of Bao-yu's gender confusion everywhere: at his first birthday, when various objects were placed around him to ascertain his future career, baby Bao "stretched out his little hand and started playing with some women's things—combs, bracelets, pots of rouge and powder and the like—completely ignoring all the other objects" (2). At age 10 he is quoted as saying, "Girls are made of water and boys are made of mud. When I am

with girls I feel fresh and clean, but when I am with boys I feel stupid and nasty" (2). Bao-yu gives every indication he wishes he had been born a girl, and expresses shame at being trapped in a boy's body. When he first meets Dai-yu, he throws a hissy fit: " 'None of the girls has got one,' said Bao-yu, his face streaming with tears and sobbing hysterically. 'Only I have got one. It always upsets me. And now this new cousin comes here who is as beautiful as an angel and she hasn't got one either, so I *know* it can't be any good' " (3). Translator Hawkes slyly remarks, "I do not think the fact that he is actually referring to his jade talisman makes this passage psychologically any the less interesting" (1:32 n8).

At school Bao-yu becomes best friends with sexy Qin-shi's younger brother Qin Zhong, "whose painful bashfulness created a somewhat girlish impression" (7), and they hook up with another delicate pair of lads known as Darling and Precious. Ugly rumors fly about this foursome, which our author neither confirms nor denies. Bao and Qin Zhong later stay for a few days at the Water-moon Priory, where the latter falls for a nun. One night as those two begin having sex, Bao-yu sneaks up on them and climbs aboard, then promises not to tell on them. "Wait until we are both in bed and I'll settle accounts with you there," he tells Qin Zhong. After a relative relieves him of his jade for safety (rendering him female per earlier symbolism), the narrator winks: "As for the 'settling of accounts' that Bao-yu had proposed to Qin Zhong, we have been unable to ascertain exactly what form this took; and as we would not for the world be guilty of a fabrication, we must allow the matter to remain a mystery" (15). Qin Zhong unexpectedly dies in the next chapter, and Bao-yu weeps bitterly at the loss of his first intimate companion. (Throughout this sequence there are several references to an openly gay relative named Xue Pan, whose camp romps with pretty boys are a family joke.) Later Bao-yu becomes entangled with a female impersonator named Bijou, which earns him a vicious beating at the hands of his father, and later yet, an older woman tries to rape him and he flees like a frightened virgin. His female companions treat him as one of the girls —never for a moment seeing him as a sexual threat, despite their isolation in the garden—and finally, we are told that after he's tricked into marrying Bao-chai, he puts off consummating the marriage as long as he can. Adding to the gender confusion are several female characters, most notably his married (but childless) cousin Wang Xi-feng, who (like her) have masculine

names and tendencies, and the fact that the Jia "family's fall is largely the result of many of its male members' . . . failure to do their 'male' duties."[60] (It's significant the novel opens with the goddess Nu Wa repairing a hole in the sky caused by a *male* demon.) Mix in the novel's lesbians, tomboys, transvestites, and role-switching actors and you have a work that cunningly questions gender assumptions and the marginalization of women in patriarchal China.

Thus it's easy to queer the *Dream* and read Bao-yu's final decision to abandon conventional society for monkhood as a liberating coming-out story to pursue his own sexual identity. The stone rejected by Nu Wa felt ashamed of not fitting in with the straight-cut stones, and we last seeing Bao-yu running off with the disreputable Buddhist and Daoist singing a song (if not a show tune). But it's more likely the author intended to portray sexuality as yet another paradox, where gay and straight are as difficult to separate as real and unreal, original and double, history and fiction, dream and reality. Given Bao-yu's affinity for the arts, there is a more fruitful way to read his unconventionality.

Joyce's *Portrait of the Artist as a Young* is a fictionalized account of how he came to write that novel; its protagonist, it can be inferred, will go on to write *Ulysses*. Proust's massive novel is another autobiographical account of how an author found his calling; it ends with Marcel ready to write the novel we've just read. Both Joyce and Proust were individualists who had to separate themselves from conventional society before they could create great art, the Irishman to the continent and the Frenchman to a cork-lined room. In his autobiographical protagonist, Cao Xueqin created a similar portrait of the artist as a young man, a fanciful mythification of how he himself became a writer. (In addition to painting, he was an accomplished poet before turning to the novel; *DRM* is filled with dozens of poems in challenging forms.) Bao-yu's stern, conventional father is constantly disappointed in his son's lack of progress in his studies; in the same chapter 23, he berates Bao-yu in front of his mother: "he is fundamentally incapable of caring about serious matters and preoccupies himself with poetic trivialities and other such airy-fairy nonsense as a substitute for solid learning." Bao and the girls start a poetry club, and while his initial efforts are weaker than theirs—especially Dai-yu's self-dramatizing laments—he

improves as a poet over the course of the novel. In later chapters, he turns to poetry to memorialize his feelings; in chapter 78, for example, after Bao's maid Skybright dies of tuberculosis, he writes an elegy for her—inspired, it must be admitted, by some airy-fairy nonsense another maid feeds him about meeting Skybright in the form of a hibiscus spirit. As he plans his work, we can overhear what Cao Xueqin must have been thinking at the genesis of *DRM*: first, he tells himself, it's unimportant that he's writing about a mere maid rather than a storybook heroine:

> It's not the value of the objects that counts, but only the heart's sincerity and reverence. That's the first thing.
>
> And secondly, the eulogy and elegy must be original too and unconventional. It's no good following the beaten track and padding the writing with high-sounding phrases; one should shed tears of blood, making each word a sob, each phrase a groan. It's better to show grief and to spare, even if that makes for an unpolished style. At no cost must genuine feeling be sacrificed to meretricious writing. Besides this was deprecated by many of the ancients too—it's not a new idea of mine today. Unfortunately, men today are so keen on official advancement that they have completely discarded this classical style, for fear of not conforming to the fashion and damaging their chances of winning merit and fame. As I'm neither interested in rank or honour, nor writing something for others to read and admire, why shouldn't I follow the style of such poetic essays as *The Talk of the Great, Summoning the Soul, The Lament* and *The Nine Arguments* of the ancient Chu people, or *The Withering Tree, The Queries, The Autumn Flood* and *Life of the Great Gentlemen*?[61] I can intersperse the writing with solitary phrases or occasional short couplets, using allusions from real life as well as metaphors, and writing whatever I feel like. If merry, I can write playfully; if sad, I can record my anguish, until I've conveyed my ideas fully and clearly. Why should I be restricted by vulgar rules and conventions?" (78)

The maiden result of this defiant declaration of artistic independence is a six-page fantasia mixing prose and poetry that elevates Bao's ex-maid to goddess status; after he reads aloud his invocation to her spirit in the

garden, he is approached by what appears to be Skybright herself but turns out to be Dai-yu, who makes fun of its extravagance and helps him revise a few lines. But Dai-yu realizes this elegy could apply to her as well: she too is associated with the hibiscus and like Skybright she will die soon from tuberculosis. When Bao-yu learns in chapter 98 of Dai-yu's death, however, he doesn't write anything; as Anthony Yu notes, "the pain of Dai-yu's memory, for Bao-yu, defies and defeats poetic language."[62] True, but perhaps he is simply biding his time: his ethereal soul-mate, his sad fairy flower, deserves something grander than a six-page elegy. "For another person I might have been content with something uninspired," he tells Aroma. "But for Dai-yu nothing but the very purest and the very best will do" (104). Given the novel's overtly autobiographical and metafictional nature (which Yu so brilliantly elucidates), it isn't too farfetched to imagine that Bao-yu eventually writes the 2,500-page *Dream of Red Mansions* for her.

That, at any rate, is how I read the novel's conclusion: Bao's renunciation of society to become a Buddhist monk is a parable for Cao Xueqin's decision to become what Stephen Dedalus calls "a priest of art," and the Buddhist Land of Illusion is yet another name for the timeless realm of art, a world more real and hospitable to eccentrics like Bao-yu than the mundane world of conventional folks. For them, Cao Xueqin painted rocks; for himself and his friends, he dreamed up a talking stone that gave us the greatest novel in Chinese literature, and one of the greatest in the world.

The towering *Dream of Red Mansions* is the high point of Chinese fiction, unsurpassed to this day, so it's not surprising that few significant novels emerged from its long shadow. Dozens of inferior sequels and imitations followed—most rewriting it with a happy ending—but nothing of consequence.[63] During this time, one genre of fiction that made considerably fewer demands on the reader than *DRM* became popular, namely *tanci*, prosimetric romance novels written by and for women. A cousin of scholar– beauty romances, they featured a female protagonist and point of view. The genre sounds like syrupy escapist fare, and I'm not aware of any translations, but one *tanci* stands out: *Zaisheng yuan* (Destiny

after Rebirth) by Chen Duansheng (1751–96). She began the novel while still a teenager, set it aside until around 1784 when she wrote a few more chapters, but then left it unfinished. (Years later a writer named Liang Desheng added three chapters to conclude it, and it was published in 1821). "To avoid an unwanted marriage forced upon her by the emperor," its heroine, Meng Lijun, "escapes from her home, puts on men's clothing, passes the imperial examinations (a male privilege only), and becomes the prime minister." Qian Ma (who I have just quoted) makes it sound like a daring, subversive work and worthy of translation.[64]

At the other end of the fiction spectrum, another genre flourished during this time that made even greater demands on the reader than *DRM*, one critics now call the scholarly novel: erudite works written by "men who utilized the form of a long narrative not merely to tell a story but to satisfy their needs for all other kinds of intellectual and literary self-expression."[65] Following the example of Wu Jingzi's *Scholars*, the genre includes Li Baichuan's *Lüye xianzong* (Footsteps of an Immortal in the Mundane World, 1762), Li Lüyuan's *Qiludeng* (Lantern at the Crossroads, 1778), and Tu Shen's *Yinshi* (History of a Bookworm, late 18th century). Unfortunately none of these has been translated, nor has the most extreme example of the genre:

The last major novel of the 18th century, and the longest novel in Chinese literature, is *Yesou puyan* (The Humble Words of an Old Rustic, c. 1780), a 154-chapter novel (which would run almost 4,000 pages in English) by an eccentric Confucian scholar named Xia Jingqu (1705–87).[66] He was a strange man: though possessing vast erudition, he failed to pass the lowest entrance exams and lived in poverty. (His novel wasn't published until a century after his death.) A high-minded adherent of muscular Confucianism (as opposed to *DRM*'s effete Buddhism), the novel indicates he was obsessed with kinky sex and female genitalia. Daria Berg wrestled this gigantic dragon of a novel into the following compact summary:

> The action is projected back into the mid-Ming era. Many details and events in the novel are autobiographical but the male protagonist, Wen Su-ch'en, a child prodigy and Confucian polymath, succeeds in the imperial examination system, attains high rank, and is singled out for

> special imperial honors. This Confucian superhero is also endowed with magic powers, physical prowess, and sexual potency. He manages a household of two wives, four concubines, and a multitude of sons, grandsons, and great-grandsons, as would have befitted an emperor. His mother reaches an old age and, as a sage Confucian matriarch and chaste widow, she too receives imperial honors. A Confucian moralist, Wen Su-ch'en sets out to eradicate heterodoxy. He conquers evil monsters, subdues rebellious monks and eunuchs, and wins the emperor's confidence. He succeeds not only in eliminating Buddhism and Taoism in China but also in subjugating Europe and converting it to Confucianism. (670)

Like an unthinkable collaboration between Samuel Richardson and the Marquis de Sade—*Clarissa* meets *Juliette—Yesou puyan* combines high moral seriousness with a perverse fascination with deviant sex. Like the monk Tripitaka in *The Journey to the West,* our hero is constantly under siege by lascivious women who crave his semen and go to bizarre lengths to try to extract it from him, which he always resists, but not before the author favors us with pornographic descriptions of their slutty efforts. The author apparently decided to outperform both *The Plum in the Golden Vase* and Cao Qujing's *Guwangyan* in graphic sexual content, and like the latter it combines elements from all Chinese genres of fiction, cleansing them of unorthodoxy and rewriting the literatus as a hero rather than a loser. It all sounds like a grandiose exercise in wish-fulfillment and sex fanatsy; I'm reminded of eccentric Frederick Rolfe's *Hadrian the Seventh*, in which the author imagined himself as the pope and savior of Catholicism while in real life he was buggering Venetian boys. Like Sade's monstrous novels, *Yesou puyan* exerts a lurid fascination, but since the author sounds neurotic and a little creepy—like the leader of a neo-Confucian sex cult—we'll back away slowly and conclude this section instead with a fanciful scholarly novel that, although not finished until early in the next century, was begun in the 1790s and draws upon all the features of premodern Chinese fiction for one last fireworks display of fabulation.

How about a gender-bending novel that (in the words of its English translator) "has the combined nature of *Grimm's Fairy Tales, Gulliver's Travels, Aesop's Fables* and the *Odyssey*, with *Alice in Wonderland* thrown

in for good measure"? Behold *Flowers in the Mirror* (*Jinghua yuan*) by a polymath named Li Ruzhen (W–G Li Ju-chen, 1763–1830). Sun Jiaxun, a leading authority on the novel, suggests Li began it around 1795 while living with his brother in Haizhow and studying under the great scholar Ling Tingkan (1757–1809), from whom he picked up the wide erudition flaunted in this learned novel, and finished it 20 years later. The earliest extant edition is dated 1818, after which Li continued to fine-tune it for an illustrated edition published in 1828.

Like most fantasy novels, *Flowers in the Mirror* sounds silly in summary. At a birthday celebration for the Daoist goddess Western Queen Mother, the Lady of the Moon and her friend Aunt Wind conspire against the Fairy of a Hundred Flowers and dare her to make all flowers bloom at once as a party trick. The Fairy insists this would go against nature's timetable and refuses; she promises "willingly to go to earth to suffer migration in the rimless ocean of births and deaths, if I should ever be so muddle-headed as to order all the flowers to bloom at the same time."[67] Many centuries later, the king of hell decides to disrupt the Tang Dynasty by letting loose a fox-spirit on earth, who incarnates herself as China's first and only female emperor, Wu Zetian (ruled 684–705), but not before the malicious Lady of the Moon suggests Wu should demonstrate her might and glory by commanding all flowers to bloom simultaneously in winter. She does, they do, and the Fairy and her 99 flower fairies are sent down to earth to be reincarnated as girls.

The Fairy of a Hundred Flowers is born into the family of a restless scholar named Tang Ao; thwarted in his career because of his association with rebels who opposed Empress Wu's seizure of the throne, he decides to retire at age 50 and become a Daoist immortal. Conveniently, his brother-in-law Lin Zhiyang is a merchant who regularly travels into several remote nations of the world, so Tang Ao asks to join him on his next voyage. Before leaving, Tang Ao is told by a Daoist priest in a dream that he needs to prepare himself first before seeking the Dao with works of charity, and recommends gathering the dozen flower-spirits who were reincarnated overseas (rather than in China, like his daughter) and bring them back to the mainland.

In the chapters that follow, Tang Ao and Lin Zhiyang visit over 30 exotic lands, which allows Li Ruzhen to criticize obliquely the customs of his own

time (thought not as bitterly as Swift did in *Gulliver's Travels*, more like Lewis Carroll in *Alice in Wonderland*). They visit the Country of Gentlemen ("where people yield to each other's wishes instead of competing for selfish gain" [565]), the Country of Giants (referring to the largeness of their hearts), the Country of Tall People, of Restless People, Black-toothed People, Long-eared People, Intestineless People, Dog-headed People, Black-bottomed People, Little People, etc., where they occasionally encounter bright 14-year-old girls (often disguised as boys)—that is, the reincarnated flower fairies. (Most of the places are from ancient Chinese travelers' tales, fleshed out with Li's satiric imagination.) Among the more interesting stops are the Country of Sexless People and especially the Country of Women, where women dress and act like men and vice-versa. Lin catches the eye of the "king" of this land and is forcibly transformed into a woman by means of painful foot-binding, ear-piercing, and other indignities. Tang Ao helps rescue him, but decides to stay abroad and pursue the Dao while Lin returns to China with his bouquet of flower fairies.

Tang's daughter Xiaoshan, distraught at her father's absence, joins Lin's next voyage to search for him; she rescues more of her fairies but fails to find her father, only a letter from him urging her to return and take the civil-service exams for girls (ages 16 and under) recently instituted by the feminist Empress Wu. She and the other 99 fairies pass the exams, which is followed by 10 days of celebrations, dinners, games, and conversation in an enclosed garden (spread out over *30* chapters). Afterwards, Tang's daughter resumes her search for her father and for personal immortality, while others get married and join their husbands in an uprising to restore Wu's son to the throne. Unlike the bulk of the novel, these final chapters are dominated by young men. The rebels have to break through four fortified passes guarding the capital before they can overthrow the queen, each of which represents a vice that a virtuous man must overcome: drunkenness, anger, lechery, and avarice. (Li demonstrates his wisdom by fingering greed as the worst vice; sex is the least in his view.) Each pass is protected by a magical labyrinth, a surrealistic site where soldiers brave enough to enter behold allegorical symbols and historical figures from the past, tempted by the vices they represent. (Not all survive.) The queen is overthrown, "natural" order restored as her son is returned to the throne, and all that's left is for

someone to tell the tale. The pet white monkey of the Fairy of a Hundred Flowers goes off with an inscribed tablet recording all these events to find a scholar to turn it into a book. (This, like much else in the novel, is very reminiscent of *A Dream of Red Mansions*, which our author must have known.) The fairy monkey searches down through the centuries for someone suitable but is rejected by three of China's famous historians—all of whom ignored Empress Wu's achievements—so he finally settles for Li Ruzhen, "who had a reputation of sorts," and who agrees to write it up "for his own amusement" (896).[68]

In recent years, feminist critics have praised *Flowers in the Mirror* for its emancipated attitude toward women, its exposure of sexual double standards and the cultural construction of gender, and for its cast of talented girls. This must be tempered, however, with the facts that (a) the novel opens with the mischief caused by bickering women, (b) a female emperor is considered as contrary to nature as flowers blooming in winter, (c) mention is made throughout of slave girls without a whisper of emancipation for them, and (d) the resourceful girls of the first half of the novel turn into reactionary housewives by the end, willing to commit suicide to preserve their virtue if their soldier-husbands die in battle.[69] The author is critical of society, but only insofar as it has strayed from Confucian principles; he doesn't call for a reevaluation (much less rejection) of traditional values, especially regarding the role of women in Chinese society. And even though he praises the Daoist ideal of detachment from the mundane world, Li's obvious fascination with the workings of the world undercuts the religious sentiments of the novel. Its title may come from traditional images of the illusoriness of life—"flowers in the mirror, moon in the water"—quoted in the novel's opening chapter,[70] but the scholar Li would have been interested in the botanical particulars of those flowers, the history of mirrors, and in calculating the angle of refraction of the moon in water. Like the Buddhism in *DRM*, the fairytale Daoism of *Flowers in the Mirror* is mostly window dressing.

Rather than play the social critic or Daoist preacher, Li Ruzhen was more eager to show off his encyclopedic knowledge. He includes in his novel discussions of almost every scholarly topic imaginable, and the novel is filled with lists, recipes, medical prescriptions, mathematical diagrams, a

phonetics chart, and typographical oddities—most spectacularly, a huge palindromic poem near the beginning of chapter 41 that can be read backward, forwards, up, down, and in various swirls to yield hundreds of short poems.[71] "Chapters 81–93," C. T. Hsia notes, "amounting to more than 60 pages of small print, especially, are quite unparalleled for the author's minute description of a banquet game that calls for the hundred girls to quote from a hundred different classics."[72] Like other Chinese scholar-novelists, Li also plays metafictional games. In chapter 23, Lin Zhiyang tries to sell the natives of the Country of Elegant Scholars on a book entitled *Shao Tzu*—a take-off on Lao Tzu's *Daodejing* (Book of the Way, 5th century bce?)—which is actually an advertisement for Li's own novel:

> But this *Shao Tzu*, or The Young Philosopher, while setting out to provide entertainment, has for its hidden purpose exhortation of men to reform, even through many veiled hints and suggestions.
>
> For in this book are to be found the teachings of the Hundred Schools; a gallery of men and women; a whole collection of flowers and birds; the arts of calligraphy and painting, of music, and of chess; the sciences of medicine, of divination and astrology, of phonology and phonetics, of arithmetic and computation. It further contains all manners of riddles, an extended drinking game, the Double Six, cards, archery, football, a plant competition, 'arrows and pot,' and a hundred other pastimes, so diverting as to chase away the languor of sleep even on the hottest afternoon and so mirthful as to cause much spurting out of rice if recounted at the dinner table. (trans. Chang 1973, 406)

In chapters 89 and 90, a fairy visits the girls' epic party and narrates a long poem recounting their earlier history as fairies and foretelling their futures. Hsia describes it as "a thousand-word poem in the ancient, five-word style. It adopts a single rhyme throughout and does not duplicate a single character, with the exception of many repetitive phrases to be expected in ancient-style poetry. It is altogether a most difficult poetic feat . . ." (221). And like *A Dream of Red Mansions, Flowers in the Mirror* ends with the

author agreeing to write the novel we've just read. (Li promises a sequel, but never wrote it.)

The Destiny of Flowers in the Mirror is not the greatest Chinese novel, and nearly every one of its formal and thematic features can be found in the greater ones that preceded it. It is considered the most erudite of them all, though the scholarly consensus is that its erudition is often tedious, and the whole thing a Menippean mélange that doesn't quite jell. As Ellen Widmer puts it, "reading *Jinghua yuan* becomes a process of balancing one interpretative framework against another, of choosing between less than wholly convincing alternatives, and of emphasizing some features over others."[73] *Flowers in the Mirror* is a farewell party for the classic Chinese novel, one final blow-out commemorating all its characteristic features: adventure, satire, myth, magic, manners, learning, and allegory, not to mention a toyshop of China dolls with names like Purple Lily, Melody Orchid, Baby Phoenix, Red Jade, Rainbow Cloud, Star Glory, Silver Moonlight, Melting Spring, Brocade Heart, and (my favorite) Fragrant Book. Like the girls' victory celebration, it may go on too long and get a little pedantic, but it's a fitting conclusion to one of the most sophisticated bodies of fiction in world literature.

KOREAN FICTION

China has always exerted an enormous influence over Korea, which originated as one of its provinces. Even after the peninsular kingdom became independent in the 8th century, it maintained its giant neighbor's religious beliefs, civil-service examination system, and its alphabet, which wasn't supplanted until 1444 when its brilliant King Sejong (ruled 1418–50) invented the simpler Hangul script used ever since. (As in Japan, the educated classes were bilingual and continued to use Chinese for many functions.) Consequently, it's not surprising that early Korean literature shares many features with that of China, whose novels in particular would always be popular in the Land of Morning Calm.

For example, Korea's earliest significant fiction was a response to Luo Guanzhong's great adventure novel *The Water Margin* (late 14th century). A courtier and poet named Ho Kyun (1569–1618) condemned it as

"licentious, wily, cunning, and unsuitable for education,"[74] and set out to write a cleaner version that wound up being even more seditious. *The Tale of Hong Kiltong* (*Hong Kiltong chon*, early 17th century) is a novella set during the reign of King Sejong, and is structured in thirds. The first third features a gifted boy who suffers indignities because he was born to his father's concubine rather than to his wife. At age 10, Hong Kiltong becomes the jealous target of his father's other concubine, who conspires to get rid of him. Escaping assassination (by way of magic, which seems to symbolize visionary individualism), he conscientiously takes leave of his parents and shakes the dust of Seoul off his feet to head "aimlessly toward the shrouded mountain recesses" (127).[75]

Alienated from his family, Kiltong becomes alienated from society during the middle third of the tale. After several years of wandering, Kiltong stumbles upon a bandits' lair in a valley, reminiscent of the one in *The Water Margin*, whose motley crew make him their leader after a test of strength. Beginning with a raid on a Buddhist temple, he becomes a successful but scrupulous outlaw who steals only from corrupt officials, never from the poor or "the rightful property of the state" (130). After magically creating seven clones of himself, each with his own band of outlaws, Kiltong wins a wondrous reputation and frustrates the king and his officers by seeming to be ubiquitous. King Sejong commands Kiltong's (legitimate) half-brother In-hyong to capture him, who does so by appealing to Kiltong's sense of filial duty. Turning himself in, Kiltong complains that he would never have become an outlaw had he been treated as a member of the family and a legitimate member of society. But the king is puzzled when the other seven Kiltongs turn themselves in too, and all eight then vanish. (I'd like to think the author is acknowledging that a man can play many roles—loyal son, disloyal subject, hero to the people, enemy of the state, magician, scholar—but it may be just one more trick the author plays on the reader in a section filled with magic.) Kiltong then demands to be appointed Minister of War in recognition of his talents, but as soon as the king accedes to his request, Kiltong abandons Korea for China.

In the final third of the novella, Kiltong settles on an island and has his band of outlaws join him there. One day he comes upon some monsters, kills their leader, then rescues and marries two girls they had abducted.

Divining that his father is dying, he returns to Seoul disguised as a Buddhist monk; his father dies before he arrives, but not before leaving instructions that his prodigal son is to be treated as legitimate should he ever return. Kiltong is reconciled with his family, but not with his country: he takes his father's coffin back to China for burial, then a few years later attacks an island kingdom and makes it his own, and makes sure King Sejong back in Korea hears about it. "Hong Kiltong is indeed a remarkable man of splendid talents" (146), he announces, further validating our hero's sense of self-worth. But Kiltong never returns to Korea, reigning for 30 years over his utopian kingdom and dying peacefully at age 72.

Although the novella starts off realistically enough, it quickly moves into the realm of magic to point the moral that character and ability are more important than pedigree, a universal fairytale motif. This transition also allows the author to preserve his hero's sheen, which would be tarnished if the tale had stayed in the messy, realistic world depicted in *The Water Margin.* Ironically, this G-rated version of the Chinese classic was soon condemned for being unethical and unpatriotic; after Ho Kyun was executed in 1618—implicated in a failed coup led by some marginalized *illegitimate* sons (like his protagonist)—a contemporary conservative critic called Yi Sik snickered he got what he deserved for having written such a scurrilous work. Rejecting society and state in favor of self-exile and autonomy, *The Tale of Hong Kiltong* was considered by Yi Sik and his ilk to be as "unsuitable for education" as the author claims to have found *The Water Margin*, though something tells me he was as wily and cunning as Luo's novel and knew exactly what he was doing. So did the state, which is why it executed him.

Luo Guanzhong's other historical fiction, the monumental war novel *Three Kingdoms*, literally haunts a novella composed later in the 17th century, *The Record of the Black Dragon Year* (*Imjin nok*), a fairytale version of the devastating Imjin War (1592–98).[76] It opens as Guan Yu, one of the three oath-brothers of *Three Kingdoms*, appears to a woman in a dream and annunciates she will give birth to a boy who will someday provide valuable service to the king of Korea. Lord Guan makes similar appearances throughout the novella, but his ghostly presence is about all the *Record* has in common with *Three Kingdoms*. Luo's novel has been

famously described as “seven parts fact and three parts fiction”; the *Record* reverses those proportions for a compensatory dream version of the war that celebrates Korean acts of valor over the historical hardships they endured during the Imjin War. (Most of those valorous acts are performed by ordinary subjects; the anonymous literatus who compiled this version is fairly contemptuous of the clueless king and his corrupt ministers.) Even as the war was in progress, eyewitness reports and oral tales began circulating, but our author pretty much ignored those inconvenient truths and waved a wand of fantasy over the whole thing. Characters are nine feet tall, wear impossibly heavy armor, practice many forms of magic, and are capable of any supernatural deed. Appropriately enough, the style is as fanciful as the plot: “Upon seeing the deaths of his soldiers and generals, the Japanese general Kiyomasa became furious. Stretching his lips two feet wide and gnashing his teeth, Kiyomasa put on a twin-phoenix helmet and a three-thousand-pound suit of armor. He came forward shouting like a white tiger that grips a person in his mouth while perched on a steep cliff with a waterfall.”[77] The result is cartoonish and extravagant, as flamboyant as a Korean pop video, but the novella nonetheless is enjoyable as long as one doesn’t take it too seriously. It’s more interesting for psychological and political reasons than for literary ones, an example of how some people will repress and revise a painful experience to make it more tolerable, even heroic.

The finest Korean novel of this period may also be the most derivative of Chinese literature, but what it lacks in originality it more than makes up in charm and sophistication. *A Nine Cloud Dream* (*Kuun mong*, 1687) by Kim Manjung (1637–92) was written in Chinese for his mother, a well-read woman who had raised Kim on a steady diet of Chinese classics. (When older, he would read Chinese novels to her for their mutual enjoyment.) Drawing upon the the same Buddhist dream-tales that would serve Cao Xueqin and Li Ruzhen so well, *A Nine Cloud Dream* concerns a young Buddhist monk who commits a minor indiscretion with eight female fairies, is sent to hell, and punished with reincarnation in 9th-century China, as are the flirty fairies. A bright boy, he rises to fame, romances the eight disguised fairies along the way, and eventually becomes the emperor’s right-hand man and the husband of eight wives and concubines. They live

in harmony until old age, when he decides to retire and become a monk, at which point he awakes and realizes it has all been a dream. He and his eight companions are as impermanent as clouds, hence the title. Convinced of the illusoriness of the real world and the vanity of social success, he returns to his studies and eventually becomes the leader of his monastery (which includes the eight fairies as nuns) and finally becomes a bodhisattva.

Kim Manjung, a scholarly official who was always falling in and out of favor due to political factionalism, initially wrote the novel during a year of exile to cheer up his mother, using the Buddhist frame as a convenient structure for a highly aestheticized *jeu d'esprit*. Worked up from dozens of topoi from Chinese history and literature, it's a dazzling display of everything he learned from his mother and an homage to talented women like her. Given Kim's reputation as a womanizer, it's safe to say the novel also gave the middle-aged exile an excuse to dream up a gaggle of unforgettable girls, and they give *A Nine Cloud Dream* its considerable charm. Those immune to such charms can natter over the conflict between Confucianism, Daoism, and Buddhism at work in the novel, as many of its critics have done.[78]

We get our first glimpse of the girls in chapter 1. The monk Hsing-chen, almost 20, is sent by his Indian guru Liu-kuan down to the undersea realm of the Dragon King to pay his respects. After the monk sets out, eight fairy girls arrive at Liu-kuan's monastery on Lotus Peak, scattering fairy flowers as they inform the guru that the Daoist goddess Lady Wei has sent them there to pay *her* respects. After doing so, the girls lollygag amidst the beautiful scenery. "Now that the Lady has sent us here on this lovely spring day and it is still quite early," one suggests, "let's go to the top of the peak and loosen our robes, wash our ribbons in the waterfall and make a few poems."[79] Following the source of the waterfall, they arrive at a stone bridge over a river, where the author conjures up one his many conflations of art and nature, reflection and reality: "The spring air was intoxicating. The eight girls sat on the bridge and looked down into the water. Streams from several valleys met there to form a wide pool under the bridge. It was clear as a polished mirror and their pretty dark eyebrows and crimson dresses were reflected there like paintings from a master's hand. They smiled at their reflections and chattered together happily without thought of

returning home and did not notice when the sun began to slip behind the hills" (18). Into this enchanting setting Hsing-chen returns. Having got a little drunk at the Dragon King's, he too takes off his robe and bathes his hot face in the stream when "Suddenly a strange fragrance was carried to him on the breeze. It was like neither incense nor flowers. It entered his mind and intoxicated his spirit, like something he had never imagined before" (19)—the scent of young girls in flower. Slipping back into his robe, he follows the fragrance to the girls on the bridge. He asks permission to cross, but they tease and toy with him instead. After he pays a "toll" by changing peach blossoms into jewels, the girls giggle and ride away on the wind. Hsing-chen can't sleep that night, of course, can't stop thinking about the fairies, and fantasizes what it would be like to be a successful Confucian official who "takes pleasure in beauty" instead of a poor Buddhist monk. His guru senses this weakness and thus sends him off to take a ride on the wheel of reincarnation.

He is reborn into the family of a hermit and renamed Yang Shao-yu. The first half of the novel tracks his progress from a gifted student to an honored member of the emperor's court (which he accomplishes by age 16), during which he encounters one enchanting girl after another: the reincarnations of the eight fairies. (Interestingly enough, they are all from broken homes or single-parent households, as is Shao-yu: his father abandoned him at age 10 to follow the Dao, and thereafter Shao-yu remains devoted to the woman who raises him. Kim's own father committed suicide shortly before he was born.) Indulge me as I introduce each of them.

At age 13, Shao-yu leaves home to sit for the civil-service exam, but en route comes upon a secluded house surrounded by willow trees, whose fronds "swept the earth like the hair of a girl when she combs it in the breeze after coming from her bath" (26). Aroused by the scene, he composes and recites a poem about the willow (a traditional Chinese symbol for femininity), which awakens the inhabitant of the house from a nap and brings her to the window: "Suddenly her eyes met Shao-yu's. Her hair was mussed and her jade hair-pin was askew. Her eyes were still heavy with sleep and she looked dazed. Her eyelids were messy and her make-up was smudged, so that her own natural loveliness, beyond what anyone could describe or paint, was revealed" (26). By the standards of the day, the girl's steady gaze is an act of shocking brazenness, but this is no standard

girl; this tousled beauty is Rainbow Phoenix (Ch'in Ts'ai-feng), the first of the eight grounded fairies. No older than he, Phoenix decides she wants to marry him after he moves on to the local inn, so she sends him a message in verse to that effect, which impresses him as much as her beauty: "Neither Wang Wei or Li Po could have written better" (29), the author has him exclaim, the first of many self-congratulatory remarks Kim Manjung makes about his own creations. Shao-yu replies in verse, suggesting a rendezvous that night, which Phoenix rejects not for moral reasons but for fear of gossip. The next day, however, Shao-yu wakes to find the streets filled with soldiers, responding to a rebellion, and Phoenix is lost in the chaos. Distraught at both the loss of his fiancée (as he now considers her) and the cancellation of the exam, Shao-yu shuffles home.

The following spring he has better luck. Now 14, he leaves again for the capital and en route comes across a pavilion where young men are partying with some singsong girls. The guys have all written poems and submitted them to one of the entertainers, a reserved girl with beautiful manners called Moonlight (Kuei Ch'an-yüeh), who has a faultless eye for poetry. The person with the best poem gets to have sex with her; it isn't clear whose idea that was, but Shao-yu dashes off a poem, wins the contest, and that night "They made love ecstatically, with happiness beyond what either had anticipated" (40). She too proposes marriage, to which Shao-yu agrees, *after* he has passed his exam.

And so it goes as he unknowingly reunites with the eight fairies he dallied with on the bridge in his previous life. In the capital, he disguises himself as a musical nun to meet an aristocrat's daughter named Jewel (Cheng Ch'iung-pei), "more like a fairy than a girl" (45), who possesses an expert's knowledge of ancient music. After he comes in first in the exam, he becomes engaged to the pretty musicologist, and at her suggestion takes on her companion Cloudlet (Chia Ch'un-yun) as a concubine. Some sexual hijinks ensue as Cloudlet fools Shao-yu into thinking she' a seductive fairy and then a ghost, and more crossdressing as Moonlight returns dressed as a young man for whom Shao-yu has homoerotic urges. (It's difficult to remember Kim wrote this for his mother's entertainment; she must have been a liberal-minded lady.) Moonlight then tricks Shao-yu into sleeping with her friend Wild Mongoose (Ti Chung-hung), another dancing girl who had also disguised herself as a boy. (Shao-yu's persistent inability to see

through disguises feeds into the novel's real/unreal dichotomy and undercuts his eventual conversion to Buddhism, as I'll argue later.) When Mongoose explains her deception, we learn the author's inspiration for this bedtrick (probably from one of the books Kim's mother read to him when younger): "Shao-yu was very pleased. 'Even the famous dancer Yang Chih-fu cannot compare with you. She played the same sort of trick on Duke Li Wei. I am only ashamed that I cannot compare myself to the duke when she came to him in the night' " (80). Kim Manjung makes these sorts of allusions throughout the novel, acknowledging where he found the raw materials for his story. (It's worth remembering that originality wasn't a virtue at this time; the skillful rearrangement of traditional materials was the true sign of artistry.)

A crisis arises when the emperor orders Shao-yu to disengage himself from Jewel in favor of his daughter, Princess Orchid (Lan-yang, for whom Gale uses the unintentionally louche name "So-wha"), a crisis left hanging when Shao-yu goes off to put down a rebellion in Tibet. One night in camp, an assassin appears out of thin air, a girl fetchingly dressed in a military tunic named Mist-wreath (Niao-yen), but she recognizes Shao-yu as her soul-mate and suggests marriage: "So they went to bed together. The gleaming of his sword took the place of nuptial candles, and the boom of gongs replaced the music of the lute" (99).

At this point, exactly halfway through the novel (the structural significance of which translator Rutt obscures with his chapter rearrangement), Shao-yu falls asleep and has a dream within the dream-novel, descending again to the realm of the Dragon King, whose daughter Whitecaps (Po Ling-po) seduces him into defeating a dragon prince in exchange for assisting Shao-yu's army. (Whitecaps suggests they should wait until after she transforms herself before having sex—"I am covered in scales and smell fishy"—but Shao-yu gallantly says he doesn't mind her "scales and fins" [103].) "So he took her by the hand [fin?] to bed, and they did not know whether it was a dream or reality, they had such joy together" (103). Nor does the reader know, for after Shao-yu wakes, there's evidence in the "real" world that it wasn't a dream, and in fact Whitecaps will return later in the novel as a singsong girl and become another of Shao-yu's concubines. Returning to the capital, Shao-yu finds his engagement crisis solved after the emperor adopts Jewel and arranges for a double wedding

with her and Orchid (though as a joke everyone dupes Shao-yu into believeing Jewel has died and he's marrying Orchid's sister), and soon the other six fairies join him as concubines.

I've gone into some detail to show that all eight girls Shao-yu acquires are not generic fairy princesses but distinctive, accomplished young women, boldly independent even by modern standards. Most of them are extremely well-read, and their other talents are showcased in chapter 14, where the author arranges for a hunting picnic to let them make splendid spectacles of themselves. By this point, Shao-yu has a stable of eighty female entertainers, "divided into East and West divisions. Ch'an-yüeh had charge of the East forty and Ching-hung had the West forty" (148).[80] Orchid's brother Prince Yüeh challenges Shao-yu to a contest, pitting his girls against Shao-yu's, and the latter's talented concubines win the day. Some demonstrate their archery skills, or horsemanship, or sing, dance, play the lute, or improvise poetry. Especially impressive is Mist-wreath's sword dance:

> Then he and Shao-yu each drew their swords and gave them to Niao-yen, who fastened up her sleeves, took off her sash and leapt into the dance. The swords flashed around her till their silver glinting blended with the swirling red of her dress like late snow-flakes flurrying among the peachblossoms. The music grew faster, the blades flashed more fiercely, the tent was filled with a frosty light, and her body could not be distinguished in the dazzling fury of the dance. Suddenly a green rainbow stretched across the sky, and a chill breeze passed between the cups and dishes. Everyone's marrow froze and their hair stood on end. Niao-yen had intended to go through all the movements she had learned, but fearing that Prince Yüeh would be alarmed, she stopped dancing, threw down the swords, bowed and withdrew. It took the prince some time to get his breath back. (158–59)

After we catch *our* breath, we realize this long chapter doesn't fulfill any narrative function: Prince Yüeh doesn't plot revenge for his defeat, we learn nothing about the talented girls we didn't already know, and in fact after this chapter the narrative races through the rest of Shao-yu's life—about 40

years in four pages—to conclude with his conversion to Buddhism. Just as Shao-yu experienced a dream within his dream halfway through, the novel climaxes with this performance within the performance piece that is *A Nine Cloud Dream*. Kim Manjung intended to awe and delight his reader as much as Mist-wreath does with her sword dance, and when the monk wakes from his dream at the end, it is analogous to a reader closing the covers of a novel. Of course the experience is unreal, but the experience should enhance one's sense of the possibilities of life—suggest (to Kim's original readers, for example) that unmarried Korean girls should be given a chance to spread their wings instead of being confined to house arrest, and that kings should appreciate their loyal ministers—not drive one to renounce life and take religious vows just because the world doesn't measure up to one's nine-cloud dream.

Numerous times Kim exposes how credulous Shao-yu is, always falling for clever girls' tricks and disguises—"I may be stupid, but I would not be duped by a ghost" (69) he boasts after being duped by a "ghost" (Cloudlet)—so when he embraces Buddhism at the end, the consistent pattern of gullibility suggests he's falling for yet another con. In fact, after Shao-yu learns how Cloudlet duped him, he has a moment of enlightenment: "Now I understand the principle of transmigration" (70). That is, he understands the principle's a joke, or rather merely a metaphor for the roles people play and the changes we go through in *this* life, not a cosmic vehicle for the soul wheeling through the aeons toward nirvana. Womanizer Kim had a different kind of nirvana in mind, as the conclusion to this charming episode suggests; a tipsy Shao-yu takes Cloudlet by the hand and teases her:

> "Are you really a fairy or a ghost? I made love to a fairy and I made love to a ghost, and now I have a real pretty girl! But I'll make you into a fairy and I'll make you into a ghost! Shall I make you into Heng-o, the beautiful woman who lives in the moon? Or shall I make you into a fairy of Heng-shan?"
>
> She answered coquettishly: "I have been very bad to you, haven't I? But you will forgive me?"
>
> "If I didn't spurn you when you were a ghost, what do you think I'll do now?"
>
> She stood up and thanked him solemnly. (70–71)

Hence the novel is more akin to Ho Kyun's utopian fantasy than to the Buddhist fable it appears to be: one more deception in a novel filled with deceptions, but this time played on the reader instead of on Shao-yu. If you're truly convinced of the vanity of the material world, you write something like *The Pilgrim's Progress*, not something as smart and debonair as *A Nine Cloud Dream*.

Kim Manjung wrote many other novels, though only one survives: *Sa-ssi namjong ki* (Lady Sa's Dismissal, c. 1690), written in Korean but not yet translated into English.[81] It is a roman à clef about the palace intrigues that led to Kim's exile in 1689, specifically about his niece Min Inhyon, who in 1681 married at 14 the 19-year-old King Sukchong (ruled 1674–1720). He dumped her eight years later after she had failed to produce an heir and made his concubine Chang Huibin his queen. (In 1694, two years after Kim died, the concubine was disposed and Inhyon welcomed back to the throne.) Kim's version is set in China with stand-in characters, but in the 18th century an anonymous author wrote a novella on the same scandal, this time naming names.

The True History of Queen Inhyon (*Inhyon wanghu chon*) expands on the brief summary above, but like *The Record of the Black Dragon Year* transforms history into a fairy tale to highlight Inhyon's superhuman devotion to propriety and decorum. The reader can see the shift from the historic to the folkloric in the first two paragraphs:

> Queen-consort Inhyŏn, wife of King Sukchong, 19th king of the Yi dynasty, was daughter of the Minister of Defence, Min Yu-jung, and granddaughter of the Chief Minister of State, Song Chun-gil.
>
> It was said that her mother, Lady Song, had a strange dream while pregnant, and at last on the twenty-third day of the fourth moon of 1667 she gave birth. Auspicious signs accompanied this birth, and the room in which the child was born was filled with aromatic fragrance. The incident was so extraordinary that her parents forbade the members and servants of the family ever to speak of it.[82]

From this point on, the plot unfolds with the black-and-white simplicity of a fairy tale. Inhyon is a paragon of rectitude, the concubine as evil as can be,

and the king a befuddled man who moodswings theatrically between rage and contrition. The moral opposition is dramatically reinforced by a righteous minister who opposes the king and undergoes a series of tortures without flinching, and by the shamans and an ex-prostitute named Sukchŏng (only a diaeresis mark away from the king's name) whom the concubine enlists for the black magic that eventually kills Inhyon after she is rethroned. (Inhyon did indeed die in 1701 at age 34, seven years after her restoration.) The good are rewarded, the evil punished, the moral delivered. It's not particularly good, but it is worth noting as an example of the "court novel" (*kungjong sosol*) and because it's one of the few Korean novels from this period that has been deemed worthy of translation.

During the 17th and 18th centuries, hundreds of other novels were written in Korea, but they sound like routine and derivative romances, adventure stories, family sagas, and war novels. Critics sometimes single out for exception *Showing Goodness and Stirred by Righteousness* by Cho Songgi (1638–89) and the anonymous *The Tale of Lady Pak*, but while the latter has been translated into French (1982), neither is available in English. If nothing else, this period seems to have been a busy time for the novel—as shown in Lee's *History of Korean Literature* (pp. 261–87)—unlike in Korea's truculent neighbor to the east.[83]

JAPANESE FICTION

Japan was the first Far Eastern country to produce a significant body of novels—hundreds were written between the 10th and 14th centuries—but the last to join the early modern era, due largely to centuries of incessant warfare and self-imposed isolation. When the Japanese resumed writing fiction in the early 17th century, the initial results were trivial booklets (*zoshi*): derivative tales modern in setting but medieval in method, parodies of the classics, fictional travelogues, ghost stories, and collections of anecdotes, many of them written by and for the demobilized samurai class. Even later, when Japanese writers started producing more ambitious novels, they dismissed them as *gesaku*—"playful compositions," entertainment written for money, not to be taken seriously as art. For a round-eyed outsider, evaluating the Japanese fiction of this period is handicapped by the

paucity of translations, as though even scholars don't consider much of this fiction worth translating. Nevertheless, there are a few works that illustrate the millennium-long tendency of Japanese writers to keep the novel novel.

The earliest work that might pass for a novel is the episodic *Tales of the Floating World* (*Ukiyo monogatari*, 1666) by a Buddhist *ronin* (masterless samurai) named Asai Ryoi (1612?–91?). Ryoi was aware that the traditional Buddhist trope of "the floating world" (*ukiyo*)—meaning the sad, fleeting impermanence of things—had recently been turned upside-down: if we're here today, gone tomorrow, it's all the more reason to seize the day, not rue its brevity, or so believed the new class of pleasure-seekers made up of "courtesans, actors, jesters, rakes, and dandies, offensively rich shopkeepers, their spoiled sons and daughters, and their vain, luxurious wives."[84] In the preface to *Tales of the Floating World*, Ryoi's narrator redefines *ukiyo*:

> When we live in this world, we see and hear the good and the bad in all things; everything is interesting, and we can't see more than one inch in front of us. It's not worth the skin of a gourd to worry about it; fretting just causes indigestion. So cross each bridge as you come to it; gaze at the moon, the snow, the cherry blossoms, and the bright autumn leaves; recite poems; drink saké; and make merry. Not even poverty will be a bother. Floating along with an unsinkable disposition, like a gourd bobbing along with the current—that is what we call the floating world.[85]

The gourd image is echoed in the name of the protagonist, Hyotaro (*hyo* = gourd), a rich young profligate who enjoys sneaking off to the pleasure district of Kyoto for fornication and gambling until he runs out of money. He becomes an advisor to a corrupt official intent on fleecing the populace, and eventually winds up a lay priest. The novel contains a good deal of social criticism, directed not at prostitutes but at wastrels like Hyotaro and especially at government officials who prey on farmers and peasants.

But the novelist most closely associated with the floating world genre (*ukiyo-zoshi*) is Ihara Saikaku (1642–93). Born into a prosperous family of Osaka, he had the leisure to devote himself to writing, specializing in *haikai* —linked haiku poems that combined classic poetic themes with the

concerns of the newly emerging merchant class. After his wife died in 1675, Saikaku shaved his head like a monk and began wandering throughout Japan, teaching *haikai* and experimenting with prose pieces and puppet theater. In 1682, he published the first major Japanese novel of this period, *The Life of an Amorous Man* (*Koshoku ichidai otoko*), a startlingly modern work in a style called *haibun*, which converted the imagistic qualities of haiku into narrative form. With its sudden shifts from poetic locutions to current slang, its unconventional grammar, and the elliptical nature of haiku (which suggests rather than states), this style made great demands on its first readers, but thanks to its racy subject matter they turned it into a best-seller nonetheless, as would happen with the ultraliterary illicit *Lolita*. Saikaku's disciple Saigin called it *tengogaki*—"wild writing."[86]

The story-line is simple: Yonosuke—short for Ukiyo-nosuke, "Man of the (Floating) World"—is born to a wealthy man and his ex-courtesan wife, and as early as age seven begins to experience the sexual urges that will dominate his life. After losing his virginity to the proverbial girl next door, the boy moves in with some relatives in Kyoto and begins pursuing every girl and woman within reach. Soon he is visiting the red-light districts with older men and making the acquaintance of the glamor girls of "the flower and willow world."[87] At age 15, Yonosuke adds members of his own sex to his expanding circle of partners, and for a while even works as a pimp for these "flyboys."[88] Yonosuke's exasperated parents apprentice him to various trades, all of which he neglects in favor of his insatiable sexual curiosity, so at age 19 he is disowned by his father. Without money or connections, Yonosuke shaves his head and becomes a monk, which doesn't last long. Ripping his sacred robe into dishrags, he embarks on a number of schemes and scams to stay alive and meet more women, a degrading life that lasts for 15 years. Just when he's hit rock bottom at 34 (the same age at which Saikaku lost his wife), Yonosuke learns his father has died and, in a reconciling gesture, has left an enormous fortune to his missing son.

Rejuvenated and refinanced, Yonosuke decides to devote the rest of his life to enjoying the finest courtesans in Japan. The second half of the novel charts this rake's progress through all the teahouses of the floating world: sampling the fleshy wares of every city, falling in and out of love, buying some courtesans out of their contracts, marrying the greatest one, and

breaking hearts until his fifties. “Willingly racked by love, by the time Yonosuke was fifty-four, his notebooks show he had slept with 3,742 women and 725 men.”[89] In the final chapter, at age 60, Yonosuke realizes his life of pleasure will condemn him to hell, but rather than repent, he builds a ship christened *Yoshiiro maru* (the SS *Lust,* Keene waggishly translates it)—outfitted with the clothing of his ex-lovers, rigged with braids of hair women had offered him, and stocked with aphrodisiacs—and gathers some like-minded friends, convincing them to join him on a quest for the mythical Island of Women in the east. They set sail in the tenth month of 1682—the month *The Life of an Amorous Man* was published—and are never seen again.

Among the aphrodisiacs are 200 copies of the *Tales of Ise*, the last of several references in the novel to the 10th-century *uta monogatari* featuring the legendary lover Ariwara no Narihiri (825–80). Saikaku clearly intended his outrageous work to be a modern, parodic update of that delicate work; Yonosuke occasionally glimpses the “tears in things,” but unlike Narihira he is neither a poet nor a courtier. Similarly, Saikaku’s decision to divide his novel into 54 chapters is an homage to *The Tale of Genji*—there are several references to the Shining Prince within the novel as well—and the occasional reference to the medieval *Tale of Saigyo* has a likewise self-deprecating function: Yonosuke’s lifelong pilgrimage to all the whorehouses of Japan is a travesty of the monk Saigyo’s visits to the holy places of the island. Literature, like history, often repeats itself, first as tragedy, then as farce; Yonosuke is a farcical Narihira, Genji, Saigyo. Although there is an undeniable exuberance to Saikaku’s novel as the merchant class revels in a counterculture devoted to art and sensuality, “a ribald escape from the gloom of Buddhism, the rigid codes of official Confucianism and the draconian laws that governed sexual morality,”[90] there is also a sense of cultural degradation as Saikaku registers how far Japan has fallen from the glory days of the Heian era. An early chapter opens:

> It was a time when the precious blooms on Mt. Oshio were about to scatter and men’s hearts were moved by a delicate sense of regret. But it was an age, too, when dandyism had become a fad. Swordmanship appealed to the young, with emphasis on style, not skill. The blade was

drawn from its scabbard with a dramatic flourish, in the manner of Kembo, master faddist of his line.[91] . . . All young men in the social hierarchy of Kyoto took to this new-fangled mode, discarding age-old customs.

If delicacy of feeling had become a thing of the past, dandyism brought in its wake a rough, reckless spirit. Men visited the blossoming plum trees in Kitano or the wisterias in Otani, not to admire the flowers but to crush them in their hands. They saw the smoke erupting majestically from Mt. Toribe and thought no more of it than the smoke issuing from the bowls of their slender tobacco pipes. Most of all they found it egregiously silly to let their servants carry their water gourds. They carried these themselves. (43–44).

The first half of the novel especially is filled with similar signs of degeneration: nuns and priestesses engage in drug-dealing and prostitution, fishermen's wives whore around while their husbands are at sea, religious ceremonies turn into orgies at night, and inns are filled not with traveling aristocracy but with the dregs of society (who would never have been mentioned in a Japanese novel before this):

The showman from Nara with a monkey on a leash, the frightful freak from Nishinomiya who exhibited himself as a "barbarian," the romantic hand-to-mouth idler who posed as a mendicant priest and chanted Buddhist sutras for a few coppers, the wayward monk with an eye for sensuous pleasure, the ubiquitous peddler of gewgaws—all were there. And all were fly-by-night actors on the seamy stage of life, existing precariously from day to day and spending their day's earnings in one night of unrestrained fun. All that remained in their possession the next morning were their shabby stocks in trade, their battered fans, and their straw traveling hats. (61–62)

The rootless existence of Yonosuke and such characters is well-served by the novel's episodic structure, the lack of narrative continuity dramatizing the loss of cultural continuity during this liberating period.

One loss that Saikaku doesn't seem to mourn is that of institutional religion. Yonosuke's skepticism toward religion is not depicted as a

character flaw, and the sacrilegious fact the 3,742 women he has bedded is the traditional number of gods in the Japanese pantheon suggests Saikaku held the same contemptuous view of the state religion that most educated men did. As Ivan Morris notes,

> In Saikaku's time the Buddhist priesthood was largely sunk into lethargy and uncreativeness and had ceased to be an inspiring force in the artistic or intellectual life of the country. Its main function, indeed, was to minister to the dead; the aura of the crematory hung heavily over the temples. . . . The priests themselves were frequently corrupt and cynically unmindful of their vows. Comfortably ensconced in their "worldly temples" (*sekendera*), many of them not only partook of flesh, but violated their vows of celibacy by secretly indulging themselves with boys or women. (36)

As a result, *The Life of an Amorous Man* is the first Far Eastern novel in which the characters don't seem like prisoners of their culture, but free agents. They have some wiggle room to reject parts of it, to make their own choices, and even though they make some sleazy ones, there's a vitality about the society depicted here that feels very modern: Saikaku could be describing the Japan of 1982 rather than 1682. At its best (in the second half of the novel), the floating world was an aesthetic event, hosted by elegant demimondaines, whose guests sang, danced, drank saké and rice wine, recited poetry, went on cherry blossom-viewing excursions, listened to music, watched the moon, and laughed by lantern-light until retiring for a night of sex. When in Nagasaki, Yonosuke notes the grim contrast between Japan's pleasure houses and those of the Dutch traders (the only Christians allowed in the country at that time): "Foreigners, he was told, kept to their own brothels. Trade was brisk there, for—or so the natives said—they were of a tough breed. But their prostitutes were never exhibited to public view. Everything was done secretly, night and day, as if it were a shameful thing and must be hidden and its existence denied" (227). Saikaku may look back in regret at some things, but he ends his novel with his protagonist looking forward to new delights, to more beautiful, talented women. We're probably meant to laugh at the idea of a 60-year-old man and his geriatric cronies loading up with Viagra and porn for a pleasure cruise to Hawaii, but his

medieval counterpart in a novel would have ended up squatting before a statue of Buddha in some drafty mountain hut mumbling lines from the *Lotus Sutra*. Whether or not you agree that's progress, *The Life of an Amorous Man* is a sardonic appraisal of a culture in upheaval, wildly written in a genre undergoing a similar upheaval.

Saikaku followed this with the first of a dozen thematic collections of short stories he would publish over the next 30 years, which many critics consider superior to his novels.[92] He wrote a second, minor novel in 1685, *Wankyu issei no monogatari* (The Tale of Wankyu the First)—based partly on a true story and partly on a popular Kabuki play—about a rich merchant who blows his fortune on a courtesan, goes crazy, and commits suicide, which has been translated into French (1990) but not into English. It contains a darker view of the floating world, one that characterizes his only other significant novel, *The Life of an Amorous Woman* (*Koshoku ichidai onna*, 1686). Superficially this resembles *The Life of an Amorous Man* in that it tracks a sensualist from childhood to old age, but differs in that it's a first-person confession and lacks the earlier novel's reckless lust for life: after a wayward youth and a period of degradation, Yonosuke enjoys a charmed life, but for the female protagonist of the later novel, it's a downward spiral into degradation almost from page 1.

The short novel uses a frame that's worth noting: it begins in the third-person as a nameless narrator crossing a ferry overhears two young men complaining about their sex lives; one has worn himself out from overindulgence yet wishes he had more stamina so that his semen "might gush forth unceasingly like this river that flows beneath us."[93] His companion wishes he could find a country without women so that he could focus on the natural world. Curious, the narrator follows them unobserved into the hills to a hut with a sign announcing "The Cell of Love" (or "Hermitage of Voluptuousness" [Hibbett] or "Hut of a Sensuous Hermit" [Drake]), occupied by a bent-over, gray-haired woman of 70 dressed like an old-fashioned courtesan. The two young men have come to her for advice on matters of the heart and ask for her life story, which—after a few glasses of saké—she is happy to oblige them with. The narrator, like a voyeur, overhears all this and settles in for the story.

As sexually precocious as Yonosuke, this woman (we never learn her name) as a girl was sent from her home in Uji to attend a lady at the royal court in Kyoto, where she "fell prey to wanton feelings" at age 10 and began dressing much older, which catches the eye of a soldier who then has sex with her. This earns him the death penalty—fulfilling the novel's opening line, "A beautiful woman—so the ancients say—is an axe that cuts off a man's very life" (1.1)—and earns her a one-way ticket back to Uji. A few years later she returns to Kyoto and joins the floating world, first as a dancer, then gets engaged but blows that by seducing her fiancé's father; is hired as a concubine to an impotent man who prefers boys anyway, then finally becomes a high-class courtesan, but over the next few years keeps descending in rank because of her bad attitude and vanity. Swearing off the life of a courtesan, she shaves her head, disguises herself as a boy, and joins a Buddhist monastery, but is exposed and becomes the wife of a lascivious priest. Escaping that mess, she then begins a series of dead-end jobs—calligraphy teacher, parlor maid, hairdresser, seamstress, companion to an old lesbian, bathhouse attendant, procuress – until by age 64 she has hit rock bottom, living in poverty and failing even as a *soka* (nighthawk), the lowest form of whore. In the novel's final chapter, she wanders into a Buddhist temple and in the Hall of the 500 Disciples is startled to see "that all these statues were perfect images of men with whom I had shared a pillow in my palmy days" (6.4). (These 500 represent only a fraction of her body count: she estimates she's had sex with over 10,000 men.) After this sacrilegious epiphany, she decides to commit suicide, but is providentially saved by "an old acquaintance," who provides her with a hut and convinces her to give her heart to the Buddha and spend the rest of her days mechanically "invoking the Sacred Name from morning until night" (6.4). Returning to the present, she then thanks her two auditors for giving her a chance to get her awful story off her chest.

It's a lively if sordid tale, but it doesn't explain how the 64-year-old convert to Buddhism became the sprucely dressed, 70-year-old sex therapist of "The Cell of Love" in the opening chapter. Apparently she repented repenting and decided to devote her golden years to warm memories of love rather than to the cold comforts of religion. This supposition is supported by the novel's relentless mockery of Buddhism; when she shaves her head and offers her services to the priest early in the novel, she quickly learns he's

not the only randy bonze in the temple and reverts to her former religion of sex: “In the course of time I urged this one religion on temples of all the eight sects, and I may say that I never found a single priest who was not ready to slash his rosary” (2.3). Far from elevating her thoughts, the Five Hundred Disciples she beholds in the Buddhist temple at the end look like johns, and her conversion sounds like just one more bad career move for this unlucky lady. When we’re introduced to her at the beginning of the novel, she seems to be not at peace with the world, but back in the floating world of her youth: dressed as a courtesan, downing shots of saké, “she strummed upon her *koto* and sang a love song” before she launches into her tale. In a sense, she is still plying her trade, with the two young men as her latest customers. The reason we never learn her name? “A guest who didn’t ask the girl’s name till he took his leave was clearly a man of distinction,” she recalls from her teahouse days (2.2, trans. Hibbett), placing the distinguished reader in the role of a courtesan’s customer, who can have her for the price of the book (currently $14.95 from New Directions).

The first-person mode—still rare in Japanese fiction at this time—forced Saikaku to exercise his ingenuity. Instead of a traditional, third-person description of his heroine, he has the agent for the impotent man looking for a concubine display a painting of the type of woman he’s after, which doubles as a flattering portrait of our heroine. And hewing to a woman’s point of view gives greater force to Saikaku’s exposure of the seamy underside of the floating world and of the lives of Japanese women in general. The most striking scene in the novel may be one near the middle (3.2) while the protagonist is a parlor maid to an aristocrat. One night all of the women of the household (including the aristocrat’s wife) gather for a “Jealousy Meeting,” where they vent their frustration with considerable verbal and physical violence. They take turns hurling abuse at a scapegoat: a life-size doll representing every beautiful woman the men in their lives have preferred over them. It’s a bitter, terrifying scene—reminiscent of the spirit-possessions in medieval Japanese novels—and takes a turn for the supernatural when the doll opens her eyes and lunges to take revenge for all the verbal abuse, which freaks everyone out. Aside from this touch of the occult, *The Life of an Amorous Woman* is a realistic survey of the various options open to a middle-class woman in 17th-century Japan, none of them very appealing. Even though the narrator admits that her nymphomania and

unprofessionalism caused most of her problems, she also implies that even if she had stuck to the straight and narrow, she probably would have wound up in a boring marriage screaming in frustration at a doll. As with Yonosuke, it's unclear how we should take her final reaffirmation of the sensuous life: as a recognition of the superiority of the "one religion" of sex over the eight sects of Buddhism, or as a sign of unrepentant folly. Like Moll Flanders at the end of her long confession, she doesn't seem all that contrite, and maybe even a little proud of her wild life. But unlike Defoe's novel, the reader is grateful to have gone along for the ride.[94]

Saikaku devoted the rest of his career to writing collections of short stories—except for a forgettable porn novel dashed off near the end of his life called *Irozato mitokoro zetai* (Households of Three Pleasure Quarters, 1688)—but his two major novels are milestones in the history of Japanese fiction, earning him a place second only to Murasaki Shikibu. Unfortunately, his bold novels were followed by a century's worth of pale imitations of his work, pastiches of older classics, and every species of lowbrow commercial fiction, none of which have been deemed worthy of complete translation.

One anomaly is *The Animal Court* (*Hosei monogatari*) by the philosopher Ando Shoeki (1703–62). This novella recounts how once during sequential meetings of the four groups of animals—birds, beasts, reptiles and insects, and fish—the animal kingdom decided that mankind was no better than animals. Nor is this intended as flattery or camaraderie: animals can't help acting as they do (and in fact are fulfilling their natural roles) while humans disregard the "Way of Heaven" to indulge in cruelty, lust, greed, ignorance, and arrogance. Anticipating the leaders in Orwell's *Animal Farm* who decide some animals are more equal than others, Shoeki's animals are shocked that humans establish hierarchies among themselves under the foolish assumption that some consider themselves superior to others. And who do the animals blame for this mistaken notion? "The sages, Shakyamuni [the Buddha], the many great teachers, the monks, and all men of learning," as one critter complains (60). The animals tear into them all: Confucius, Mencius, Laozi, Zhuangzi, every sect of Buddhism, Confucianism, Shintoism, and virtually every theological system in Japan's history. The author's admirable contempt for theology and abstruse

philosophy is undercut, however, by his adherence to eccentric theories and prescientific folklore. Nevertheless, his outrage at widespread exploitation —of humans by other humans but also at animal cruelty—is Swiftian in its disgust, and his willingness to challenge every ism of his day is brave and revolutionary. Despite its *monogatari* label, there's no real narrative; at each meeting, animals introduce themselves and vent at how humans imitate their worst traits. *The Animal Court* is less a novel than a fierce philosophical tract, but it's one more example of the willingness of Japanese writers to experiment with genre hybridization.

Another hybrid was the *dangibon*, satirical sermons crossed with fantastic adventures—like *Gulliver's Travels*, but funny. The best examples were concocted by a homosexual polymath named Hiraga Gennai (1728–79). This Leonardian genius studied botany, Dutch culture, and color printing technology, invented scientific instruments (the magnetic compass needle, the thermometer, the electric generator), and published a six-volume *Classification of Various Materials* in 1763. The same year, he whipped out a lengthy novel entitled *Rootless Weeds* (*Nenashigusa*), a term for books lacking a factual foundation. The novel opens in Hell, which is becoming so crowded that various contractors and developers are trying to convert the environs of Tokyo into subdivisions of Hell. Amidst this boom, a dead gay monk arrives before the king of Hell, Enma, bearing a portrait of a Kabuki actor specializing in female roles. Previously repulsed by homosexuality, King Enma is smitten by the pin-up, and sends a water spirit up to earth to seduce the actor and bring him down to Hell for the king's delectation. The selections in Chris Drake's translation that appear in Shirane's *Early Modern Japanese Literature* (463–86) are wonderful, alternating between social satire, erudite digressions (the second chapter provides a history of Kabuki theater), delicate, gay love scenes, and vibrant, detailed cityscapes like the following:

> In a riverside restaurant, cool thin white noodles are shaken dry and heaped high as a snowy Mount Fuji on the Island of Tiny People. A mother with children holds up her wide, hanging sleeve so her children won't see as they pass a sign advertising Long Life Ointment for lengthening men's lovemaking. A cautious country samurai notices a man wearing a wide sedge hat suspiciously far down over his face and moves

> out of the man's way, gripping the front of his robe and the purse inside. A smooth-talking juggler sends his beans and saké bottles spinning up into the air, and a watermelon seller on the street curses a red shop-lantern nearby for stealing the fresh color from his slices. . . . A low voice chanting a puppet play in an impromptu reed-screen shed is drowned out by "Repent! Repent!" as passing pilgrims pour purifying water over their heads. A fragrance from Igarashi's Hair-Oil store, followed by the smell of spitted eels broiled in soy sauce. People peep into boxes at moving stereoscopic prints, imagining they're in other worlds, and the crowd around a glassblower wonders whether icicles have formed in summer. Potted trees revive and suddenly look fresh when a florist sprinkles water on them, while papier-mâché turtles hanging out for sale move in the wind and take on souls. (473–74)

In the same year Gennai published *Rootless Weeds*, he also brought out *The Modern Life of Shidoken* (*Furyu Shidoken*, 1763), based on the life of a popular streetcorner performer of the time. Like those "moving stereoscopic prints," most of the novel consists of supernatural travels to imaginary lands, where Gennai was free to criticize corrupt Japanese culture from the safety of allegorical comedy. It recalls not only *Gulliver's Travels* but Smollett's *Adventures of an Atom*, an English *dangibon* written almost at the same time as Gennai's and coincidentally set in Japan. Tantalizing selections of *Shidoken* can likewise be found in Shirane's *Early Modern Japanese Literature* (486–512).

Some writers during this period preferred the short story over the novel, but even in that genre only one writer stands out, the floating-worldly Ueda Akinari, whose *Tales of Moonlight and Rain* (*Ugetsu monogatari*, 1776) has deservedly been translated many times. Others were seduced by the popularity of *kibyoshi*, what we now call graphic novels. Japan already had a long tradition of illustrated fiction in the form of *emaki*, or narrative scrolls, but while the color illustrations in those aspired to art, those in *kibyoshi* were merely black-and-white line drawings. Like today's graphic novels, they run the gamut from routine adventure and ghost stories to romance, humor, sermons, and urban satire. But the best of them are quite sophisticated, displaying (as Adam Kern writes in his definitive study, *Manga from the Floating World*) "a marked intertextuality, a penchant for

wordplay fostered by the use of the phonetic Japanese syllabary (*kana*) instead of the mixed Japanese-Chinese hybrid (*wakan konkōbun*), witty repartee, verbal puzzles, scatological humor, and an irreverence toward the usual conventional pieties of those in political or moral authority" (183).

One of the most accomplished of these graphic novelists was Santo Kyoden (1761–1816), three of whose works Kern translates/reproduces in his book. *Those Familiar Bestsellers* (*Gozonji no shobaimono*, 1782) is a kind of *Battle of the Books* satire on the current Japanese publishing scene, in which personifications of various competing genres clash, specifically the old-fashioned books of Kyoto versus the hip, trendy ones issuing from Edo. The ancients try to turn the moderns against each other until characters representing *The Tale of Genji* and the *Tang Poetry Anthology* step in at the end and criticize them all. As Kern's extensive notes indicate, the novella is filled with complex literary allusions and wordplay; the scolding *Genji* character, for example, is called "The Chiding Prince." There are even more literary allusions in Kyoden's *Playboy, Roasted à la Edo* (*Edo umare uwaki no kabayaki*, 1785), in which a rich young fop named Enjiro, his head turned à la Don Quixote by love songs and romantic Kabuki plays, tries to earn a reputation as a philandering playboy by paying geisha to spread flattering rumors about him, then staging a mock double suicide that goes comically wrong. The strangest of Kyoden's graphic novels is *The Unseamly Silverpiped Swingers* (*Sogitsugi gingiseru*, 1788), which literalizes the Eastern folk belief that lovers divided in this life might join each other in the next by committing a double suicide. The protagonist has two heads (one male, one female) joined to a single body, a medical impossibility but pregnant with satiric possibilities. Collectively named Oinosuke at first, its parents sell her/him to a Kyoto sideshow, where they do well enough to move to Edo and take on separate names, Hanbei (male) and Onatsu (female), and become a famous geisha. Each has a separate lover, and all four agree to a quadruple suicide before a Western doctor intervenes and surgically separates them. A satire on both romantic fiction and the androgyny of Kabuki actors (heroines were played by males), it is also a dazzling linguistic display as Kyoden mirrors the main plot with "inversions, reversals, chiasma, duplications, uncanny similarities, repeated onomatopoetic and mimetic phraseology, parallel syntax, and his-and-hers matching subplots" (Kern 434). I'm not much of a fan of graphic novels—

my appreciation is limited to those of Edward Gorey and Dame Darcy—but these are extremely clever works aimed not at kids but at sophisticated, educated adults.

The *kibyoshi* craze died out in the first decade of the 1800s, just when the full-length novel became popular again, specifically love stories (*ninjobon*), historical romances *(yomihon*), and comic novels (*kokkeibon*).[95] The latter was revived by a prolific *kibysohi* writer/illustrator named Jippensha Ikku (1765–1831) with a long, serial novel entitled (in its only English translation) *Shank's Mare* (1802–9). Guidebooks with a narrative element had been popular since the seventeenth century – in addition to *Tales of the Floating World*, Asai Ryoi wrote *Tokaido meishoki* (Famous Sights of the Taikado [1659], referring to the highway between Tokyo and Kyoto) – and in fact the first installment of *Shank's Mare* was entitled "Travels in the Floating World" (*Ukiyo dochu hizakurige*). For the third installment, Ikku changed the title to *Tokaidochu hizakurige* (Travels on the Tokaido), which the Japanese fondly shorten to *Hizakurige.*

It's little more than the comic adventures of two amiable dolts named Yaji and Kita, who decide to escape their problems in Edo and make a pilgrimage to the great shrine at Ise, not because they're religious but because of its reputation as a tourist attraction. In serious literature, a journey is a metaphor for self-discovery, but here it's just an excuse for puns and pratfalls. Like an Abbott and Costello movie, the novel is a series of talky skits in which Yaji and Kita are conned out of their money, tricked by clever courtesans, or exposed as the fools they are. There's a heavy helping of scatological humor—our heroes unintentionally drink urine on more than one occasion, and there are juvenile jokes about smelly loincloths and the like—along with a number of farcical sexual adventures. A few of the knockabout episodes are mildly amusing, and the realism is a century ahead of Western fiction, but the real appeal of the novel is Ikku's road version of the urban floating world. The open road offered an exhilarating sense of freedom, and in a society as casual about sex as the Japanese were (if their novels of the period are to be believed), this included unlimited opportunities for sex with strangers, as the narrator notes with Whitmanesque gusto at the beginning of book 6:

> Naturally one is curious about the people who are travelling the same roads, and those whose fates are linked together at the public inns do not always have their marriages written in the book of Izumo. They are not tied by convention as when they live in the same row of houses, but can open their hearts to each other and talk till they are tired. On the road, also, one has no trouble from bill-collectors at the end of the month, nor is there any rice-box on the shoulder for the rats to get at. The Edo man can make acquaintance with the Satsuma sweet-potato, and the flower-like Kyoto woman can scratch her head with the skewer from the dumpling. If you are running away for the sake of the fire of love in your heart, you can go as if you were taking part in a picnic, enjoying all the delights of the road. You can sit down in the shadow of the trees and open your little tub of saké, and you can watch the pilgrims going by ringing bells. Truly travelling means cleaning the life of care. With your straw sandals and your leggings you can wander wherever you like and enjoy the indescribable pleasures of sea and sky.[96]

Each of the novel's eight books begins with stately prose like this before descending into snappy dialogue and one-liners.

Since Ikku was writing cheap entertainment for money rather than literature for the ages, he doesn't bother justifying some discrepancies—vagabonds Yaji and Kita seem to have an inexhaustible supply of money even though it's stolen or conned out of them on numerous occasions—nor does he take advantage of the metafictional possibilities of one episode (book 5, part 2) where Yuri pretends to be the famous author Jippensha Ikku and is feted by the literati of Ueno until word comes that the real Ikku has just arrived; Yaji and Kati skedaddle out of town before the author and his comic creation can meet, which would have been fun. Because of the popularity of his saké-swilling buffoons, Ikku started plagiarizing material from other authors to keep the show on the road, and in fact after concluding book 8 in 1809 (the portion available in translation), he gave in to popular demand and churned out another thirty-five installments over the next 13 years, as well as a prequel. Eight was enough, giving the floating world of readers a raunchier version of Dickens's *Pickwick Papers* and anticipating the freewheeling genre of the modern road novel.

Jippensha Ikku's commercial success was resented by a fellow *kibyoshi* writer named Takizawa (aka Kyokutei) Bakin (1767–1848), who disapproved of Ikku's vulgar style and subject matter. Bakin took the comparatively higher road of *yomihon*, didactic historical novels with supernatural flourishes, and modeled after medieval Japanese war novels like *The Tale of the Heike* and *The Tale of the Soga Brothers,* but also Chinese novels like *The Water Margin*. Described by one critic as "a kind of Sir Walter Scott of the Tokugawa period,"[97] Bakin is best known for a long novel set in the twelfth century entitled *Chinetsu yumiharizuki* (Strange Tales of the Crescent Moon, 1807–11) and especially for the longest novel in Japanese literature, *Nanso Satomi hakkenden* (Chronicles of the Eight Dog Heroes of the Satomi Clan of Nanso), which he began in 1814 and which filled 106 volumes by the time he finished in 1842.[98]

The only complete translation of one of his novels—and one of the first Japanese novels to appear in English—is *Kumo no taema amayo no tsuki* (The Moon Shining through a Cloud-rift on a Rainy Night, 1808), which New Yorker Edward Greey translated in 1886 as *A Captive of Love.*[99] The Japanese title refers to Bakin's low opinion of human nature, expressed in a note following chapter 15: "Human nature is very perverse. Like the moon shining between the clouds on a stormy night, the good impulses of some people seldom last long enough to benefit the world." The English title focuses on the protagonist, a renegade Buddhist monk named Saikei whose original good impulse to become a priest is perverted by his love for a "deer-eyed *koto*-player" named Hachisuba (7).

Set in the 14th century, *A Captive Love* is a complexly structured tale of supernatural retribution. In the beginning, an irreligious hunter named Amada Buhei kills a deer of five colors—obviously a sacred animal—the original sin that generates the main plot. His shocked wife dies, and nine years after Amada sells the deerskin he goes mad; in his last moment of lucidity before dying, he encourages his son to become a priest to atone for his sin. Given the religious name Saikei, the boy leads an exemplary religious life until age 19, when women begin complimenting his looks; "a strange feeling began to possess him, that in becoming a priest he had forfeited all that makes existence charming" (2). He resists the charms of the world for another seven years until the day he spots Hachisuba in a

dress of five colors—the reincarnation of the deer his father had killed. The alluring koto player disappears (and soon marries a samurai) before Saikei can learn more about her, so he renounces his vows but not the trappings of a priest, figuring he can get by as a religious huckster while searching for Hachisuba.

Unlike the episodic *kokkeibon* of Jippensha Ikku, *yomihon* were artfully constructed; Bakin draws attention to his technique at the beginning of chapter 4, asking for the reader's indulgence as he begins to complicate his story: "The perfect bamboo has many joints and branches; a romance, many chapters and descriptions necessary to its completeness. Although I here diverge from the main part of my story, I do so in order that the latter may be more fully understood by my readers." Bakin then introduces two samurai brothers, who had once committed the sin of abandoning their leader during a battle and consequently also become the victims of divine retribution. One of them is conned out of an ox by Saikei, who insists the ox is the reincarnation of his father. In a metafictional aside, the owner says, "I have often read about these strange things in novels, but this is the first time any one has recounted such a dream to my face" (3).[100] The other brother marries Hachisuba, whose lust for Saikei will lead to both brothers' deaths. Eventually the filial offspring of one of the brothers manage to avenge their father's death with supernatural aid from the goddess Kannon after Saikei has learned the magical arts—plot twists and turns that are too bizarre to summarize briefly but that are deftly handled by Bakin as he brings his novel to a dramatic close.

As a Confucian, Bakin is withering in his contempt for Buddhism, especially for the mindless, fundamentalist version favored by women and the uneducated; his praise is reserved for the filial piety of the two teenagers who avenge their father's death, and for the unbending ethics of the samurai. Many of the chapters are followed by mini-sermons by the author on the actions of his characters, driving home his didactic themes (which are obvious enough), as well as anthropological notes that indicate he researched his novels carefully. This Japanese *Elmer Gantry* is considered one of Bakin's lesser works, which makes the unavailability of his major works in English all the more frustrating.

Another former *kibyoshi* writer who turned to *kokkeibon*, Shikitei Sanba (or Samba, 1776–1822) published two novels in the second decade of the 18th century that are remarkable for their almost total reliance on dialogue. *Ukiyoburo* (The Bathhouse of the Floating World, 1809–13) and *Ukiyodoko* (The Barbershop of the Floating World, 1813–14) recreate the chatter and gossip of public meetingplaces, and are populated by a wide range of characters "whose speech, recorded with diabolical accuracy, revealed common human weaknesses" (Keene 415). Sanba even invented his own diacritical marks to indicate varieties of dialect, and included glosses for obscure idioms. The novels are almost plotless, just a stream of small talk during a typical day at such establishments, a relaxed flow of banter, gossip, anecdotes, snatches of songs, and pop-culture references. The conversations range from technical medical diagnoses and allusions to Chinese literature to the prattle of children. Robert W. Leutner translates two chapters from *Ukiyoburo* (the more popular of the two) in his critical study of Sanba; the dialogue is so allusive and culture-specific that his 74-page selection is followed by 128 explanatory notes. Like the bathhouse, the novel is segregated: two sections take place during the men's bathing hours, and two during the women's. Not suprisingly, the men tell outrageous stories, trade dirty jokes, and sometimes put on airs; the women tend to talk about relationships and their children. Leutner undersells *Ukiyoburo* as "a fragmented work, best approached as a succession of unrelated scenes – verbal genre paintings of town life – rather than in the expectation of finding anything resembling a novel in the usual sense of the word."[101] But it does resemble some wonderfully unusual novels: the setting recalls those extended bathhouse scenes in McCourt's *Now Voyagers*, and the overall effect is similar to Gaddis's *J R*. Betraying a conventional notion of the novel, Leutner goes on to claim *Ukiyoburo*'s "mixtures of classical and vernacular locutions, and of straightforward, barebones description with irony-laden caricature, are stylistic chaos from the point of view of modern fiction" (102), but only modern *conventional* fiction; Sanba would feel right at home in the heteroglossic bathhouse of experimental fiction.

The last genre of Japanese fiction to emerge in the premodern period was *ninjobon,* sentimental novels intended for female readers (specifically, for geisha and young girls), and the finest example of the genre is also the most

innovative novel of the whole period. *Love's Calendar: The First Blush of Spring* (*Shunshoku umegoyomi*, 1832–33) was written by a bookseller/publisher named Tamenaga Shunsui (1790–1843).[102] In the 1820s he and his assistants churned out about thirty *ninjobon* potboilers, but after his shop was destroyed by fire in 1829 he began to take writing more seriously, and in 1832 the first installments of this extraordinary novel appeared to instant acclaim.

Like many *ninjobon*, it is set in the floating world: the licensed quarters of Edo. The plot is typical of the genre: before the novel opens (as we learn later), a young man named Tanjiro had been adopted by the owners of the Karakotoya brothel, where he fell in love with both the family's daughter Ocho (age 15 when the novel begins) and with a geisha named Yonehachi (around 20). But after the owners die, their sleazy clerk Kihei takes over the business and gets Tanjiro adopted into a debt-ridden family, which ruins him financially and sends him into hiding. The first half of the novel deals with the attempts by Tanjiro's two loves to save him and the jealousy between them. Two other strong, selfless women get involved: the head geisha of the house, Konoito—who helps Ocho escape from Kihei's unwanted advances and who tests Yonehachi's devotion to Tanjiro by sending her favorite customer Tobei to try to seduce her—and Oyoshi, a hairdresser who leads a vigilante group committed to good deeds. (She is introduced when they rescue young Ocho from an attempted gang-rape.) After a number of tribulations and revelations, all ends well: Tanjiro turns out to be the heir to an important clan, and after a quickie affair with another geisha, he marries Ocho and takes Yonehachi as his official mistress. Konoito and Oyoshi discover they are long-lost sisters, and after Tobei realizes Oyoshi is the unforgettable girl he had a fleeting affair with seven years earlier, he marries her. Konoito marries her childhood sweetheart Hanjiro, who inherits an estate after the sudden but convenient death of his father, and the sleazy Kihei is exposed as a crook with a record and thrown in jail.

But forget the hookers-with-hearts-of-gold/sisters-doing-it-for-themselves plot. Ignore the number of times the author shamelessly threatens virginal Ocho with rape or prostitution (which she contemplates to raise money for Tanjiro). What is fascinating about this sentimental novel is its magpie form

(with elements of *kibyoshi, kokkeibon*, and Kabuki theater) and its flippant self-consciousness as fiction. If Ikku is a coarser Dickens, Sanba a Japanese Gaddis, and Bakin a Confucian Scott, then Shunsui is Japan's Laurence Sterne, for *Love's Calendar* is filled with *Tristram Shandy*-like novelties. First, it resembles a play-script, each page a mixture of dialogue and stage directions (some indented, others run in), along with many poems and authorial observations. Here, for example, is the conclusion to chapter 4, right after Oyoshi has saved Ocho from rape. She speaks first, addressing one of her gang:

> But now let's be off—we'll have trouble finding an inn in the dark like this. Place the girl in the middle—and have a care for reprisal! **Man:** There's not a chance they'll attack. . . . Maybe I should carry the missy on my back, he? **Yoshi:** Ha! That might be safe if it's Ei-san or Kinta-san or Jirō perhaps, but Kane-san or Gen-san are dubious guards indeed for a young lady!
>
> But as they laughed the moon grew dark
> behind the misty clouds
> They headed toward some village lights
> and safely made their way.
>
> [*The scene shifts and we are with Yonehachi in her new Fukagawa quarters, surrounded by three or four singers.*]
>
> **Yone:** Umeji-san, I really am quite sure I want to do it that way. **Ume:** No one will make a fuss—go ahead and do it! [*Masaji is seated nearby plucking her eyebrows.*] **Masa:** Who cares! They always cry sour grapes when that happens. **Yone:** Well, I feel like following your advice and telling him off. **Ume:** Feeling like doing it isn't enough, honey—I remember that much! Masa-san, do you remember how it was with Kō-san? **Masa:** Exactly! You were fit to be tied. The Ōtsu-ya's mama certainly stood you well then. [*In this interval, Yonehachi finishes tying her obi, and holds out a teacup.*] **Yone:** Ume-san . . . pour a little here, would you? [*Umeji, reaching beside the hibachi picks up an earthenware bottle.*] **Ume:** This? **Yone:** You're a quick one, aren't you?! The one over there, dear. **Ume:** Oh, that! [*Taking out the heated bottle of saké next to*

it, she fills her teabowl to the brim. Yonehachi tosses it off in one gulp and strikes her breast. She gasps two or three times and clicks her teeth together.] **Yone:** I'm off, dears. **Others:** We're all behind you – really tell him off! [*Yonehachi, smiling brightly, departs.*][103]

Note the realistic dialogue and actions, and especially the absence of referents—the unidentified "him" is Tobei—which sometime makes the novel hard to follow, especially at the openings of chapters, but that's deliberate. In one of his many authorial addresses to the reader, Shunsui warns: "Since the author's method is to leave for later what ought to be explained at first, there will be places that are difficult of comprehension, and the reader is urged to pay close attention along the way" (21). Perversely, this appears four chapters before the end, way too late for the inattentive reader. But on other occasions the author is more than willing to assist the reader, to make his motives clear, or even to interrupt the story to record his experiences while writing, as in this sequence:

> Drawing Ochō close by her side, [Konoito] is suddenly convulsed with weeping. Although crocodile tears are common among this breed of women, Konoito's sincere affliction here reflects her gentle perfection.
>
> . . . The author, at the time of this writing—late one night during the month when chrysanthemums bloom—can hear the first call of the wild geese on their southward migration. . . .
>
> To such a gentle Courtesan
> I must send a message with
> the wild geese to her pillow-side.
>
> But meanwhile, Ochō too, at Konoito's ever so gentle words is struck down with weeping. Wailing, her body quivering, she looks up. (3)

Elsewhere, he'll record the poems friends left with him after visiting, or follow a spicy scene with a bogus disclaimer:

> The author takes this opportunity to interject; this work is aimed solely at the exposition of the Sentiment of Yonehachi, Ochō and the others. It is

> not intended to satirize the Quarter. I have never been well-acquainted with the Temples of Entertainment, and consequently can only give the briefest sketch of its life. May we escape being criticized in the same light as the sharehon! (3)[104]

On other occasions, Shunsui resorts to these asides out of apparent laziness, as when he introduces the mother of Oyoshi and Yonihachi and then writes: "To reproduce in dialogue her tale of bygone days is beyond the powers of the author's feeble brush; consequently, it is summarized below:" (21). Such summaries occur more frequently toward the end of the novel, as though he were in a hurry to wrap it up. In another aside, he writes that some details "could not be adequately set forth in the limited number of pages we have here" and promises to flesh them out in a sequel, a little advance advertising for a novel he published in 1834. The serial publication of the novel allowed him to make mock appeals to his readers for help; at the end of chapter 6 (the first installment), for example, he writes:

> Tanjirō starts down the stairs followed by Ochō. If they meet up with Yonehachi, what on earth will ensue? The author, indeed, as yet cannot imagine. Ah! At times like this, our handsome hero experiences a bitterness unknown to ordinary folk. But what will happen next? The author can only hope the reader will be so kind as to immediately suggest some ingenious solution.

The frustration of reading novels in installments is dramatized later in chapter 14 when Yonehachi reads a novel aloud to herself, reaches the end of the installment, then gets angry because she can't find the next volume.

This diverse novel also includes a story-within-the-story, a dream sequence, a reproduction of a letter, drawings of three teacups, songs, and several metafictional exclamations like "Isn't that crazy?! Just as in a novel!" and "No matter how much these kinds of things are popular in novels, there's very little attractive about a fight between women" (both in chap. 20). One character who appears intermittently asks, "But I wonder, do you suppose the author of this story has a grudge against me? Whenever there is a clumsy scene, *I* always get pulled in!" (24). There are two chapter 23s, and Shunsui even interrupts his story in chapter 16 to insert an

advertisement for a friend's tea-candy business, two boxed ads right in the middle of the page. ("The author mentions these not because they are made by a friend, but because they are excellent gifts to bring back in any season from the Mukōjima area—and far superior to sakura-mochi. They are truly the finest of tea candies.")

All of this elevates Shunsui's sappy story of how four women found true love to another level, making it a work that, like *Tristram Shandy*, has more in common with postmodern novels than with premodern ones. The Japanese generally consider their first "modern" novel to be Futabatei Shimei's *Ukigumo* (1889), by which they mean a realistic novel in the so-called great tradition of the nineteenth-century Victorians and Russians. *Love's Calendar* belongs to that other great tradition, innovative novels that fall outside literary history's neat time-lines and genre classifications. Premodern, postmodern, or Japan's truly first "modern" novel, a sentimental romance or avant-garde experiment—whatever it is, Tamenaga Shunsui's novel leaves us pleasurably adrift in the floating world of fiction.

TIBETAN FICTION

Japanese novelists of this period treated Buddhism with a great deal of contempt, but in Tibet, Buddhism still befuddled the minds of sentient beings. In the previous volume I gave some examples of their spiritual biographies, which contain so much fiction and fantasy that they should be regarded as novels. During the premodern period, Tibetans continued to write these fictional hagiographies; a recently translated example is *A Jewel Mirror in Which All Is Clear* (*Kun gsal nor bu'i me long*, 1609) by Lochen Gyurmé Dechen (1540–1615).[105] Drawing upon several earlier biographies, this religious scholar supernaturalized the life of T(h)angtong Gyalpo (c. 1385–c. 1485), a theologian, architect, and civil engineer who not only designed many bridges (iron suspension as well as wooden), ferries, and temples, but also founded Tibet's first opera company. That much is historical, and some of his bridges can still be seen today. He is also considered a miracle-worker who lived to the age of 125, a pharmacologist who developed "longevity pills," and the reincarnation of

the 8th-century Indian guru Padmasambhava, and it's those unhistorical beliefs that appealed to Gyurmé Dechen.

His novel is basically an "ocean of marvels" (the title of one of his sources), beginning with accounts of Tangtong's previous existences, prophecies of his coming, and the usual childhood miracles—the same m.o. followed by all religious writers who want to glorify their man. After he is ordained, Tangtong goes through the "insane monk" phase common to many beloved Tibetan saints—indulging in outrageous behavior, babbling, playing with corpses in graveyards, having sex (especially with "dakinis," religious groupies who claimed to be spirits in human form)—then travels to Nepal and India, absorbing mystic teachings and "fill[ing] the fine vase of the great adept's comprehension with the nectar of the profound path."[106] After he returns to Tibet, he has a vision in which "Many girls of human form appeared to him again and again, singing songs and stomping their feet in dance" (160), and these spiritual cheerleaders bestow upon him the title "King of the Empty Plain." Thereafter, the author gives us a lengthy account of Tangtong's mystical adventures, transforming his historical acts into religious parables. When he begins building iron bridges, for example, it's not merely to aid Tibetan transportation but so "that from the temporal auspicious connection of crossing over the element of water, he would be able to liberate all sentient beings from the four great rivers of suffering: birth, old age, sickness, and death. Moreover, with the ferries and bridges of method and wisdom he would be able to liberate the six types of living beings from the sea of the sufferings of samsāra" (174).

Mostly the *Jewel Mirror* is an episodic account of an invincible religious superman, accompanied by religious explications like the one just quoted—the usual self-medicating nonsense. Gyurmé Dechen was apparently more concerned with harmonizing his often-contradictory sources into a coherent narrative, and understandably downplayed or ignored the secular aspects of Tangtong's life. We hear nothing about how he founded Tibetan opera, and only one of his many wives and consorts is mentioned, and her only briefly: a princess-turned-nun he met in his seventies. Whatever sex life he had is sublimated into scenes like this orgiastic fantasy:

> Then the great adept decided to travel to the land of Uddiyāna [Pakistan?]. When he faced the southwest and prayed to the Great Teacher of Uddiyāna, he became exhilarated and in an instant arrived in Singala, the land of Demonesses, near Uddiyāna. About a thousand demonesses gathered and made a great display of desire. The great adept emanated a thousand physical bodies. From a state of discriminating primordial awareness that is the pristine nature of desire, he kindly satisfied the demonesses with bliss in the temporary sense and established them in the sublime, immutable great bliss in the ultimate sense. (182)

To be fair, Gyurmé Dechen was writing a hagiography, not a novel, but he made no attempt to give his narrative expressive form or dramatic conflict, as Tsang Nyön Heruka did so brilliantly in his *Life of Milarepa* (1488), which Gyurmé Dechen probably knew. (Nyön Heruka is believed to have met Tangtong Gyalpo toward the end of the latter's life.) We'll have to look further for Tibet's first true novel.

That would be *The Tale of the Incomparable Prince* (*gZhon nu zla med kyi gtam rgyud*, c. 1720) by mDo mkhar Zhabs drung Tshe ring dbang rgyal (1697–1763), which at first glance looks like a by-the-numbers knockoff of the classic Sanskrit literature he studied as a teen. (He wrote the novel in his early twenties.) The first half is based on the section of the *Ramayana* in which Rama's wife Sita is abducted and then freed thanks to the clever stratagems of the monkey-general Hanuman, and the second half on the *Vessantara Jataka* I discussed in my previous volume, stitched together per the rules of Sanskrit poetics that the author acknowledges in his epilogue. "In essence it is a tale / Of renunciation loudly drumming the Dharma," he explains there, and does he bang the drum loudly.[107]

Written in a combination of prose and poetry and set in an imaginary land north of India and south of Tibet, the novel opens like many Sanskrit novels with an older king lacking an heir; some of his ministers suggest sex with his wife as a solution, but they are opposed by those who favor prayers and religious offerings, whereby the queen soon delivers a son they name Kumaradvitiya ("Incomparable Youth," gZhon nu zla med in Tibetan). Another difference of opinion among the ministers arises on whether he

should be trained for public or for religious life, and the public faction wins out.[108] When Kumara is old enough to marry, his ministers locate the Prettiest Girl of All Time, Princess Manohari ("Allure," or Yid 'ong ma). Unfortunately this PGOAT has been promised to the sleazy prince of a neighboring kingdom, whom Manohari is forced to marry after a kidnapping attempt by Kumara's friend Bhakakumara fails. Though she and Kumara have never met, they are both convinced they were in love in a previous lifetime and are karmically destined to be reunited in this one. (Karma plays a major role in this novel: no one takes personal responsibility for any act—everything is predetermined by acts committed in previous lifetimes, a pathetic ethical evasion as irresponsible as the Christian karmic notion of original sin.) Manohari—the most admirable character in the novel—escapes deflowering from her new husband by claiming to be underage and physically unready: "At this time I will surely meet my death / If sexually involved with you, my marvelous prince" (76). Though shuddering with lust, the dumb prince believes her, even though she's actually 16 and has already been featured in an erotic bathing scene in which "her shapely, firm breasts" and "well-shaped thighs" were carefully noted (38)—one of the many offenses against reason in the novel. Eventually Kumara arrives with a huge army and easily defeats her captors, thanks to the clever stratagems of Bhakakumara. After being questioned by her karmic fiancé concerning the state of her virginity—a hint of problems to come—Manohari is married to Kumara, but not before we get the obligatory (but always welcome) head-to-toe description—"A filmy linen blouse was attractively draped over her seductive upper body. Through it you could see the protrusions of her high and firm breasts" (157), etc.—and not before some verbal foreplay as Manohari tells her aroused groom: "I am as young and lovely as a fresh flower;/My voluptuous form entraps men's minds"—correcting that on the next page to "My voluptuous sixteen-year-old form" (161–62), perhaps giving a Shakira-shake to the belt of tiny bells she wears low around her waist. Their consummation is told with an explicitness that is always surprising to those of us weaned on the relatively chaste Anglo-American literary curriculum:

> She moaned, completely prostrate

Under the heavy weight of the prince.
But still she danced with lavish movements,
Like a Champaka petal tossed by the wind.
. . . . . [until]
The touch of her bliss-inducing lotus
Caused his hot ecstasy to erupt.
At the end of the raptures of lust,
They felt their bodies melt away. (177–78)

The traditional Sanskrit novel would have ended shortly after, but this is where Tshe ring dbang rgyal decided to turn religious and denounce all the profane, samsaric activities narrated thus far. We learn that back home, Kumaradvitiya's father the king has developed a letch for a 16-year-old beauty named Lavanya Kamala, daughter of one of his retainers. The latter agrees to let the king have the girl if he promises to disinherit Kumara when/if his daughter bears him a son, to which the lust-mad king agrees. (Kings are exposed as foolish old men in this novel, and most ministers as incompetent, perhaps Tshe ring dbang rgyal's conclusion after working in Tibetan politics for six years.) Lavanya does indeed give birth to a boy, whom Kumara surprisingly welcomes: he sees the kid as his ticket out of politics and into the forest to seek enlightenment. Lavanya, a real schemer, later tries to seduce Kumara, and when he refuses and insults her, she gets the old king to banish him, which is fine by him. By then he has set up a theocratic state, which he relinquishes to Lavanya's son. Like Prince Vessantara, Kumara gives away everything he owns and vanishes into the forest, soon to be tracked down by devoted Bhavakumara, and later by Manohari, who was off visiting her parents when her husband decided to skip town. The two men enjoy the rigors of the religious life—as usual, it's the woman who points out the drawbacks—and when Bhavakumara accidentally injures himself, Kumara cheerfully breaks open his own leg to offer him some healing bone marrow. (The incident recalls those silly *Jataka* tales in which a bodhisattva plucks out his own eyes to give to a beggar to demonstrate his generosity.) Kumara attains enlightenment, learns to perform miracles and miraculously heals himself, and then—bursting with what can only be called spiritual vanity—decides to return home to share his wisdom with the unenlightened. When his wisdom runs dry, he

brings in his guru Dharmeshvara to close the novel with a 14-page sermon on Mahayana Buddhism, in verse.

Kumaradvitiya's transition from romantic hero to Buddhist sage is accompanied by a good deal of preaching, especially on the importance of following Buddha's Eightfold Path (right speech, right conduct, etc.), but it is also accompanied by, if not conditioned by, virulent misogyny, largely because Kumara becomes convinced women distract men from dharma with lust. When he meets Manohari for the first time exactly halfway through the novel—an effective bit of narrative structuring on the author's part—his very first words to her are:

> Nubile maiden, all women are dishonest!
> You let fall a rain of elocution.
> Yet the moonlike image of your thoughts
> Is obscured by clouds of chicanery.
> Is it not right to label you hypocrites? (160)

He claims at this point that he is only "testing" her, but after the honeymoon is over, he shows his true colors: when he finds out about his father's new young wife, he denigrates Lavnaya as a "poisonous flower" and "a common whore" before he's even met her—the king pursued *her*, not the other way around—and his decision to follow the religious life stems from his conviction that his desire for his own wife has damaged his karma, dooming him to many miserable lifetimes to come. On the way to his forest retreat, he sees the corpse of a young woman and uses it as the theme for a vicious sermon on the inherent vice of women:

> This stunning, lovely, youthful maiden
> Captivated the firm hearts of desirous men.
> Now who can bear to see the waterfall of pus,
> Filth, and stench pouring from her orifices? (251)

—this from the man eager to learn compassion for all sentient beings. The sight of this female extinguishes "the last flicker of desire for the lovely Manohari" (252), and when she dutifully tracks down her errant husband, he accuses her of wanting only to slake her insatiable lust and pours further

abuse on her and womankind. Scratch a religious fundamentalist and you'll usually find a neurotic misogynist.[109] Here's how his nasty little mind imagines Lavanya will end up:

> In the fearsome and dreadful gardens of hell
> Is a platform of roaring fire emitting sparks.
> There the ferocious henchmen of the Death Lord
> Will pose as your husband and you will go to them.
> They will pour molten bronze into your womb
> And brand your vagina with a blazing hammer. (225)

A dozen more passages like these disfigure the second half of the novel; his guru Dharmeshvara is just as bad, scaring the bebuddha out of his audience by describing in detail the hell to which everyone who doesn't agree with his religious philosophy will be sent (304–7).

It would be easy to dismiss *The Tale of the Incomparable Prince* as a derivative, misogynistic fantasy of religious propaganda, but there are hints that the author is speaking at least partly tongue-in-cheek. Manohari, feeling guilty that her irresistible beauty has caused so many problems, likewise turns to religion and prays through the night in the forest. "At dawn she continued to chant erudite prayers, whose sound drifted through the woods like a distant cuckoo singing, 'koo hoo' " (262). The collocation of "erudite prayers" with the mindless call of a cuckoo has a sarcastic tang, especially when we remember that at the beginning of the novel the king's wisest minister pointed to a cuckoo flying overhead as a symbol for the stupid advice the other ministers were giving the king (5). When Kumara invites the townspeople to listen to Dharmeshvara, the author compares them to "flocks of geese gathering upon a lotus pond" (299), an image of mindless conformity. Even Dharmeshvara's hellfire sermon raises an eyebrow; as Joyce demonstrated in the third chapter of *A Portrait of the Artist*, a talented mimic can write a fire and brimstone sermon without actually believing in such nonsense. Plus the first half of the novel is filled with way too many references to "the great bliss of sexual contact" (175), and too many lovely scenes of such contact, to take Kumara's denunciations of lust very seriously. Tshe ring dbang rgyal was an active young man when

he wrote the novel, and certainly never renounced the world to become a religious hermit. In all likelihood, he was probably neither a subversive nor a hypocritical religious nut, just an educated aristocrat who took up some thousand-year-old themes (religious and literary) as a literary exercise without intending to critique them seriously or worrying about the conflict in his sources between Sanskrit sensuality and Buddhist asceticism. That same habit of looking backward, of avoiding any critique of some very dubious religious notions, seems to characterize Tibetan culture in general and explains its lack of secular progress over the centuries. But what can you expect from a people who still pick a child for their spiritual leader and proclaim him the reincarnation of Avalokiteshvara, the Buddhist god of compassion, and believed, as late as the European Age of Enlightenment, in miracles—Kumara can make "fire blaze forth from his upper body while water gushed from below" (274)—as well as in dakinis and *nāgas* (half-snake, half-human gods)? Nāgas? Please.

PERSIAN FICTION

Though Iranian writers were as hobbled by Islam as Tibetans by Buddhism, they fared a little better during this period, though, as in Japan, its writers couldn't surpass their earlier literary heritage. Jami (1414–92) is considered the last great writer of Persia's classical period, and even though the country got a fresh start with the ascension of the Safavid Dynasty a decade after his death, the only subsequent novels one hears about are a few retro entertainments. For example, there's the *Bahar-Danush, or Garden of Knowledge*, assembled by Inayat Allah in 1651 from old Indian tales popular before the Islamic invasion. A young prince falls for the portrait of a lady, which he had commissioned after a parrot praised her beauty to him. His father the shah gets his courtiers to try to quench his passion by telling scandalous stories of the infidelity of women, but the prince is not dissuaded and eventually meets and marries his princess. This facetious novel, with a leering promise in the translator's preface to unveil "the cruel tyranny of the harem," was translated into English in 1799 by Jonathan Scott; one of its tales provided Thomas Moore with the plot of his once-popular novel in verse *Lalla Rookh* (1817). And then there's the *Mahbub ul-*

Kalub (Delight of Hearts, aka *Shamsah and Quhquhah* after two of its characters), a huge, didactic novel composed by Barkhurdar bin Mahmud Turkman Farahi, surnamed Mumtaz, in the early 1700s. This collection of moral tales was modeled on Sa'di's famous *Rose Garden* (*Gulistan*, 1258), a guide to self-reliant living that uses dozens of fictitious anecdotes to illustrate its teachings. Some of Mumtaz's fictions reach novella length, but those that have been translated are routine adventure stories.[110] Though the Safavids were patrons of the decorative arts, they regarded fiction as a vehicle for Shiite propaganda, and that—along with the general intellectual paralysis that handicapped Islamic countries from the 13th century onward—probably explains the absence of any major novels during their long reign (1501–1736).

But there are two short Persian novels that appeared at the end of their era that show some innovation, both resulting from contact with India during that period as some Persians fled their troubled country. The delightful *Rose of Bakawali* (*Gul-i Bakawali*, 1712) is an early example of multiculturalism: it was written by Izzat Ullah, a Persian Shiite living in India, and combines elements from the Arabic sira and Persian dastan with the Indian novel of reincarnation, and features a surprising number of sexual metamorphoses.[111] Allusions to classic Persian literature alternate with citations from the Quran, and the style alternates between Arabic economy and Persian luxuriance, peppered with the occasional Hindu term. This cosmopolitanism reflects cultural conditions in India in the early 18th century, but the novel's setting is a throwback to the days of yore. Zayn ul-Muluk, a king in eastern India, has four shifty sons but is blessed in later life with a fifth child, named Taj ul-Muluk, the hero of the novel.[112] Zayn is warned not to look at his youngest son or else he'll go blind; Taj is thus raised in seclusion, but one day the king accidentally spots him and loses his eyesight. The only cure is a magical rose belonging to a fairy named Bakawali, so the four older brothers go in quest of it, stopping en route at the palace of a courtesan named Dilbar Lakhi—so named because she charges a *lakh* (100,000) of rupees for her services—where they lose everything they own in a series of rigged backgammon games. Young Taj, exiled after inadvertently causing his father's blindness but on the same quest for the cure, arrives in Dilbar's town and turns the tables on her: he

not only wins all her property but her hand in marriage as well. (Not a word from our Shiite author on the propriety of a prince of the realm marrying a duplicitous older courtesan.)

Taj tells Dilbar of his quest for Bakawali's rose, and she warns him with an animal fable that could have come out of the *Panchatantra*; undeterred, Taj disguises himself as a dervish and pushes on, runs into a giant *dev* (demonic genie) who not only agrees to help him but also marries him to a 14-year-old princess named Mahmuda whom she had once kidnapped. (Taj withholds sex until he can accomplish his task.) The prince is then transported to Bakawali's kingdom, where he spies her sleeping in a garden. In a symbolic marriage ceremony, he plucks her rose and exchanges rings with the sleeping beauty, then takes off before she wakes. He picks up Mahmuda and returns to Dilbar's town, where he runs into his four brothers, who manage to steal the rose and return home to cure their father.

Bakawali is fairy furious when she finds she's been deflowered, but also impressed by the daring of whatever human did the deed. She makes herself invisible and travels to Zayn ul-Muluk's capital, then assumes the appearance of a young man, in which form she joins the king's retinue. Meanwhile, Taj gets his dev in-laws to create a beautiful palace for himself in the jungle, an exact replica of Bakawali's, which soon attracts the king's attention, but not before we're told the "Story of the Princess and the Dív Who Exchanged Sexes," about a princess who disguises herself as a young man to avoid her father's wrath, is betrothed in that guise to another princess, escapes and changes back into women's clothing, and attracts the attention of a male dev, who offers to exchange sexes with her so that she can properly marry that princess she's engaged to. S/He's duly married, produces a son, then returns to the dev and asks to be switched back, but is refused: in his female form the dev has fallen in love with a male dev and is expecting their first child. So the princess remains the boy her father always wanted. The story is told merely to illustrate that Allah can do anything, but it braces the reader for more sexual metamorphoses to come.

The king visits Taj's palace for the traditional recognition/reunion scene, during which the four scoundrel brothers are exposed and Bakawali learns the identity of her ravisher. She returns home and writes Taj a love letter offering herself to him, a narrative device that creates opportunities for Taj to experience even wilder adventures on the road to her kingdom, including

changing into a woman, marrying, and bearing a son (as in the princess and the dev digression), as well as changing into a black man of Abyssinia with a wife and four children. All of these metamorphoses are the fault of Bakawali's mother, who is so repulsed by the idea of her fairy daughter marrying a mere mortal that she flung him into the air. Izzat Ullah handles the idea of miscegenation nicely: another fairy sings the praises of humankind and lectures the mother on the need for racial tolerance, but instead of seeing the light, the bigoted mother mutters, " 'That is all very well . . . but to a man my daughter shall never be given' " (311)—an insightful touch. But eventually she capitulates, Taj and Bakawali marry, and after he sets up house with all three wives, "The prince passed his days with these rosy-lipped beauties, immersed in a sea of bliss" (315).

There the novel could have ended, but Izzat Ullah has further tricks up his sleeve. We learn that before she was married, Bakawali used to dance at the celestial court of Indra, who misses her and has her transported to him in "an aerial chariot," a signal that we've entered the narrative realm of ancient Sanskrit fiction. Like a restless housewife, Bakawali begins sneaking out every night to go dancing; Taj finds out by hitching a ride on the sky chariot one night and disguising himself as one of Indra's court musicians, but Indra gets mad and curses her: "for twelve years the lower half of her body shall be of marble" (320), perhaps a symbol of the loss of sexual appetite in some women after marriage. The humiliated wife flees to Sri Lanka; Taj follows, and manages to find and wed yet another woman while there, the daughter of a raja. And then in the weirdest plot twist in this hectic novel, Bakawali is destroyed but reincarnated as a farmer's daughter. Taj recognizes the baby as his former wife, and waits patiently until she reaches the marriageable age of 14, and then all three return home to rejoin Taj's first two wives, and there again the novel could have ended. But the author was having too much fun, so he tacks on the love story of Bakawali's cousin and the son of King Zayn's vizier, which involves his transformation into a bird in a gilded cage, changed back nightly to sport with his fairy girlfriend. They too are eventually married, bringing to an end—finally!—this heady potpourri of mixed marriages, mixed genres, mixed religions, and mixed gender relations. It is utterly unrealistic, of course, but the novel provided a haven for the author and his audience to imagine alternate realities and alternative life-styles.

A quieter talent is on display in the valedictory *Valeh and Hadijeh* (1750), which bids a fond farewell to the glories of Persian literature amidst tumultuous changes in Iran. A writer named Shams al-Din Faqir (d. 1769) was living in India when a fellow Persian exile, Ali Quli Khan Valeh (1712–56), asked him to write up the story of his tragic love for his first cousin, Hadijeh Sultan. Faqir tells us he had been yearning for a virgin topic to play with—"Oh, for an unpierced pearl of fancy; oh for a story yet untold"[113]—and welcomes Valeh's request for a *modern* romance, not one like those of Gurgani, Ferdowsi, or Nizami: "Like last year's almanack is the story of Ves and Raaman, the fire of Ferhod, the love of Majnun. Why talk of them, why sell old merchandise?" (24). Instead of setting his tale in the vague past, Faqir tells his story in the historic present: Valeh and Hadijeh were living in the Persian capital of Isfahan when an Afghan robber-chieftain named Mahmud captured the city in 1722. Though the cousins had been raised together and intended to marry, Hadijeh is forced to marry an ugly Persian turncoat favored by Mahmud. How ugly? "His face was like the sole of a camel's foot, his body crooked as a scorpion, his form and gait were like a frog's, his speech was like the barking of a cur, his teeth were like crooked spikes of iron, his lips were like a camel's, and his breath smelt of rottenness" (39). Because they're cousins, V & H can still keep company after her marriage, so they chastely share their misery. But Valeh starts to go a little crazy—he steals a pair of her shoes to fetishize, and then kidnaps her dog as a surrogate—and following further upheavals in Iran—the Afghans were driven out but there were further invasions by the Turks and Russians, a dictatorship under Nadir Shah, and decades of civil war for the rest of the century—Valeh decides to go into exile. After wandering in the desert like Majnun, he boards a ship for India. Fourteen years later, he receives a letter from Hadijeh, which is even dated (ah 1160; i.e., 1747), chastising him for his long silence and reaffirming her love. In a transport, Valeh writes back, praising her as his god, swearing he wrote a hundred letters during that time (postal service between India and Iran must have been really bad), and then reunites with her in a vision. This is the story Faqir wrote in 1750; Valeh then added some poetic commentary in the margins of the manuscript and pasted in fragments from Hadijeh's letters, and when he died six years later

the novel was sent to Hadijeh, in whose family it remained until our Persian translator acquired it.[114]

The story of children raised together, destined for marriage but separated by cruel fate, is a traditional one, so the contrast between this romantic topos and its realistic, politicized setting must have struck the first Persian readers as unusual. Hadijeh is described with the same metaphors as earlier Persian heroines—she is as beautiful as "a moon of fourteen days," etc.—and Valeh self-consciously follows in Majnun's mad footsteps; the effect is like a contemporary novel featuring an aristocratic couple playing at Sleeping Beauty and Prince Charming. And reading Valeh's poetic comments on the story has a curiously avant-garde feeling, like any number of modernist novels in which characters step outside of the narrative frame and comment on the story. While the author claims the story of Valeh and Hadijeh is utterly realistic—in the final chapter Faqir insists "their love-sorrow is no fancied tale, for I have seen it with my eyes" (117)—it can also be read, as the translators encourage in their notes, as yet another Sufi allegory of the union of the wandering soul with the divine. *Or* it can be read as a mockery of Islam: Valeh not only refers often to Hadijeh as his idol (a Persian cliché, but half the Quran criticizes idolatry) and claims that she is his Kaaba, his Mecca: he also gives her dog the name "Friend of the Friendless," which the shocked translators annotate thus: "One of the names of God which the faithful are forbidden in the Koran (vii. 179) to apply to any but God. Here Valeh applies the sacred name to the dog, which is regarded as unclean" (128 n33). How Faqir escaped beheading for that fierce blasphemy, I don't know. In his rapturous letter to Hadijeh near the end, Valeh adds in a note: "may I be an unbeliever in the religion of the enlightened, if there be a god save Hadijeh alone. . . . when an angel bade me cry on God's name, I cried 'Lady God.' 'Oh Lady God,' and again 'Lady God' " (103). A Sufi would insist that Hadijeh and Allah have fused into one, but there are enough unorthodox sentiments to suggest kind Hadijeh has displaced, not joined, the stern Islamic god. Faqir does end his novella by addressing Allah to explain that "in all I write I write but of thee" (118), but whether he's sincere or providing cover for his iconoclastic views is hard to say. In time of war, some write in code, and in its updating of classic Persian romance in a modern setting, *Valeh and Hadijeh* feels like

both a nostalgic rearguard action and an avant-garde foray, not a bad achievement in any era.

INDIAN FICTION

The 17th and 18th centuries were a fallow period for the Indian novel, which is especially disappointing after its stunning achievements in the Middle Ages and the innovations of Pingali Suranna at the end of the 16th century, which should have revitalized it. An anonymous Tamil writer of the 17th century produced the *Madanakamarajankadai*, evocatively if not accurately translated as *The Dravidian Nights Entertainments*, but this is merely an old-fashioned frame-novel. Prince Madanakamaraja of Mahendrapuri falls in love with two women depicted in a painting. His minister locates the two ladies, and tells them a dozen adventure stories about princes before he marries one to his prince and keeps the other for himself. Nothing new here. Sometime during the first half of the 18th century, a superbly educated young man named Viśveśvara wrote an imitation of the paronomastic, metaphor-mad novels of Subandhu and Bana written over a thousand years earlier. Entitled *Mandāramañjarī*, it concerns a prince named Citrabhanu and how he came to glimpse for the first time the girl of the title; but it is merely a series of descriptive tableaux generating endless similes drawn from the author's encyclopedic knowledge of Hindu philosophy, grammar, and myth. It's obviously a linguistically complex work, but the only English translation is atrocious, so it's difficult to say whether *Mandāramañjarī* is an homage or a parody of the 7th-century Sanskrit novel, but either way it adds nothing new to the genre.

And there's the rather pathetic, anachronistic *Citracampu* by Baneśvara Vidyalankara (1744), which celebrates an ideal king in the person of a maharaja of Vardhamana named Citrasena. The novel opens with the king observing all the sacred rites and displaying the qualities of the kings in India's ancient myths and epics. After hearing of the approach of a rival king, Citrasena and his army ride out to prepare for battle on the Bengal plains. Then he has a long dream, occupying the bulk of the short novel, in which he is escorted by a goddess named Prema-Bhakti on a tour of India's

holy sites, where they perform the appropriate rites and discuss the finer points of Vaisnavite Vedantism.[115] The goddess gives Citrasena her blessing and the king wakes in the morning to the sound of music. The devout king first performs the morning rituals and then relates his dream to his advisors, who congratulate him on his good fortune.[116] India in 1744 was a mess, torn apart by centuries of warfare, overrun by European traders, and only decades away from the British takeover. Instead of confronting these realities, Baneśvara (like Viśveśvara) retreated into a dream of old India, the India of the classic epics, a land of holy sites and rigorous religious devotion. Instead of building on Suranna's innovations, or even incorporating elements from the Persian adventure novels popular in India at the time, he too went back to the novels of Bana and Dandin for inspiration. The result is old-fashioned, reactionary, irrelevant, and naïve. (Citrasena died two years after this battle, not having accomplished much of anything.) Since I haven't read the novel, I shouldn't judge it so harshly, but Subandhu's translator Louis Gray, who did read it, shrugs it off: "it offers but little of interest" (42).

Muslim writers in India, in a similar rearguard action, adapted and translated old Arabian and Persian fictions into Urdu, the language of the Islamic community, though with better results. For example, Mir Amman of Delhi took an old frame-tale narrative entitled *Qissa Chahar Darvesh*—which he attributed to the Sufi poet Amir Khusro (c. 1253–1325) but which probably originated later in Turkey—and reworked it into *A Tale of Four Dervishes* (*Bagh o Bhahar* [literally, Garden and Spring], 1803).[117] Stripping from it the verbal flourishes of its earlier Persian and Urdu incarnations, giving it an elegant, mathematical structure, Mir Amman transformed this cautionary tale about the disappointment of love into a fascinating study in epistemology, dramatizing the uncertainty of knowledge and the deceptiveness of appearances in a series of baffling and complex tales within tales. "I was so bewildered at what was going on around me that nothing he said made any sense," a character exclaims during one episode (112), speaking for the reader at many points in the novel. While Mir Amman keeps his readers on the edge of their seats, his characters succumb to existential despair at the incomprehensibility of the

world and the unreliability of anything other than the inscrutable will of Allah.

After reaching the age of 40 without producing a son, Azad Bakht, the king of Turkey, is tempted to abdicate and become a religious recluse, and goes one night to a cemetery to meditate. There he spies four dervishes, each of whom has been directed there by a veiled rider in green clothes with the promise their hearts' desires will be granted. (This is Khizr, a legendary Islamic figure who aids lost travelers.) Concealing himself, Azad Bakht listens as the first dervish, formerly a merchant from Yemen, tells how he once loved and lost a mysterious princess of Damascus. The second, a Persian prince, tells us a similar tale about a princess of Basra. The king then returns to his palace and has the dervishes brought to him, and the next day narrates a long, four-part story about a merchant of Nishapur who kept his brothers in cages while his dog wore a jewel-encrusted collar. (This so outraged the king's sense of propriety that he almost killed the vizier who told him this until, years later, he learned there were excellent reasons for this inversion.) Azad Bakht then asks the third and fourth dervishes to tell their exotic sob stories, at the conclusion of which the king learns one of his neglected consorts has given birth to his son, which delights the king even though (for reasons too complex to explain) he has to share the baby with the king of the djinn, who compensates him by restoring to the four dervishes their lost loves.

In the unsettling world of this short novel, nothing is what it seems, and no one can be trusted (especially relatives and authority figures). A man might be a woman in disguise (and vice versa), strangers are kinder than brothers, a beautiful girl turns out to be a statue, and an empty landscape reveals an army of djinn after a little "solomon-collyrium" is rubbed on the eyes. Although the novel is not factually realistic—the geography is fanciful, and all nationalities follow Urdu manners and customs—it is psychologically realistic. Like Captain Delano in Melville's "Benito Cereno," the king and each of the dervishes seems traumatized by the realization that benign appearances can conceal malign evil, which the happy ending doesn't allay. Mir Amman concludes the novel with the feeble hope his god will "grant the wishes of all those who are in despair" (154), and what little the author tells us about himself in the prologue suggests he

was well acquainted with despair.[118] Like all authors, he plays god in his novel: he is the veiled rider in green who promises happiness, he's the king of the djinn who restores lost loves, and he's the one who rubs solomon-collyrium in our eyes so that we may behold his exotic tale of romance and intrigue, perhaps a brief respite from our own moments of despair.

There's no epistemological uncertainty or despair in the most popular and influential Urdu novel of this era. *The Adventures of Amir Hamza* (*Dastan-e Amir Hamza*) originated in Arabia perhaps as early as the 11th century, grew over the centuries after it was taken over by honey-tongued Persian storytellers (who called it the *Hamzanama*) and expanded further when Iranian expatriates took it to India in the 16th century, incorporating local legends and folktales along the way, and shaping it into a novel. Urdu translations followed—including a lackluster version in 1801 by one of Mir Amman's colleagues at Fort William College—and in 1855 the long-handled Navab Mirza Aman Ali Khan Bahadur Ghalib Lakhnavi published what he called a translation, apparently a compilation of various Persian and Urdu versions. Lakhnavi's edition was reprinted in 1871 by Abdullah Bilgrami, who touched it up with some recent poetry and ornate prose flourishes. But this enhanced edition is not substantially different from the version(s) circulating at the end of the 18th century, so that and its unabashedly premodern nature make it a suitable conclusion for this chapter.

When Musharraf Ali Farooqi's superb English translation of the Lakhnavi/Bilgrami version appeared in the fall of 2007, most reviewers called it an epic, and name-checked the *Iliad* and *Odyssey,* the *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*, *Beowulf* and *The Song of Roland*, *Le Mort d'Arthur* and *Orlando furioso.* While flattering, this is wrong. *The Adventures of Amir Hamsa* lacks both the gravitas of an epic and its function as the foundational myth of a nation, not to mention the artistry of those earlier literary epics. 'Twould be unseemly to admit into their august company a work with passages like this:

> Aadi presently felt an overpowering urge to empty his bowels, since he in his bovine greed had eaten several *maunds* [= 82 lbs.] of fruit. He took himself to the royal toilet chamber and began attending to nature's call.

> The ill-starred king of Egypt had hid in the toilet for some reason, and he was soon sunk up to his head in Aadi's ordure. Realizing that he would have no refuge there, he caught hold of Aadi's testicles and hung from them for dear life. Feeling the terrible pain in his balls, Aadi jumped up and ran out of the chamber without washing himself, dragging the king of Egypt along with him. He ran raising a great hue and cry, shouting, "Terrible is the effect of this city's air and water that it causes a man to excrete men!"[119]

The Adventures of Amir Hamza is an epic only in the modern sense of something big and bold, like a Hollywood extravaganza or a fantasy trilogy. Better to think of it as a communal adventure novel, closer to the many-authored Oriental bazaar of *The Arabian Nights* (as a few other reviewers noted) than to a true epic, or—to be culture-specific—as the comic sidekick to the noble Persian epic *Shahnameh* (which is an authentic epic and had a huge influence on *Hamza*). But this downgrade takes nothing away from its achievement. This entertaining novel doesn't celebrate a nation; it celebrates the imagination, glorifying the artist's ability to create a world that rivals, if not exceeds, the real one. The epic hero of this novel is not Amir Hamza but "the gazetteers of miscellanies, tale-bearers of varied annals, the enlightened in the ethereal realms of legend writing, and reckoners of the subtle issues of eloquence [who] gallop the noble steed of the pen through the field of composition, and spur on the delightful tale" (59).

The novel glorifies the exploits of one of Muhammad's uncles, Hamza bin Abdul Muttalib (569?–625), a warrior and huntsman who resisted his nephew's newfangled religion at first but later converted. But his name and manner of death are the only historical aspects of the tale; it is merrily unmoored from history and abounds in anachronisms, most glaringly regarding the existence of Islam decades before Muhammad dreamed it up. The novel begins a generation before Hamza's birth with an elaborate, 60-page prologue predicting the birth of an Arabian hero who will some day rescue the Persian king Naushervan from his enemies.[120] After Hamza's birth in Mecca, the novel alternates between there and the capital of Iran, Ctesiphon (now a ruined city 20 miles southwest of Baghdad), until he

comes of age, then follows him on various adventures from India to Greece. The longest section takes place in the magical land of Qaf, where for 18 years he fights giant demons called *devs* and gets engaged to several peris (beautiful wingéd fairies), earning him the Wrestlemaniac moniker "the Quake of Qaf." Like all romantic protagonistsin the Middle East, he accumulates many wives and generates many sons during the course of his adventures, most of which involve slaughtering countless infidels. He finally suffers a gruesome death at the hands of a woman, who then rips him open and devours his heart, but who escapes punishment by converting to Islam.[121]

Although nominally about Hamza, much of the novel's appeal comes from its supporting cast. You've already met Aadi Madi-Karib, a hulking ex-bandit whose gargantuan appetite provides many laughs (and some shocks: several times he rapes young girls, which results in their death). Hamza befriends several warrior-kings from other lands, who convert to Islam and help with his ethnic cleansing of unbelievers (who are considered almost subhuman in this novel). Two of Naushervan's viziers, the wise Buzurjmehr and the evil Bakhtak, connive most of the political intrigues in the novel. But the real star of the show is Hamza's resourceful companion Amar Ayyar, "the Father of Racers, the Lord of Mischief-mongers of the World, the King of Dagger-Throwing Tricksters" (135), beloved by the narrators (who regularly lavish praise upon him) and whose antics are often hilarious. Hamza himself is so predictably noble and valorous that the narrators realized they needed a large, colorful supporting cast to keep their story lively: the list of characters at the back of Farooqi's translation occupies 14 pages. The narrators overdo it in the second half, introducing too many indistinguishable evil devs and human giants, but the huge cast insures a parade of fresh faces.

The novel's freshest faces belong to several remarkable women—or girls really, since most of them are introduced at the age of 14; that is, at the peak of perfection per Muslim standards of the day. A lute-playing slave girl teaches Naushervan's father a lesson in self-determination at the beginning of the novel, and Naushervan's daughter Mehr-Nigar falls in love at first sight with Hamza (bathing naked in a nearby river); she reluctantly provides a Penelope-like model of constancy after Hamza agrees to marry her but *not*

before he returns from Qaf. There he falls under the Circean spell of Aasman Peri, a fiery-tempered girl who always dresses in red. At first Hamza declines her marriage proposal because of his engagement to Mehr-Nigar, but after he is assured that what happens in Qaf stays in Qaf, he reluctantly marries her. (Thereafter, she foils his repeated attempts to return to the real world and even tries to kill him.) Hamza is rescued from his Qaffy wife by another supernatural woman, marries several more women in later years, and will eventually be killed by a woman—the last in a series of conflicted relationships with women that parallels his conflicts with infidels. Further gender complications ensue from many instances where men disguise themselves as women and vice versa, not to mention a creature called the *nim-tan*: the male resembles the right half of a human being, the female the left half, and when joined together he/she/they can run like the wind.

Unfortunately, *The Adventures of Amir Hamza* isn't nearly as interesting and inventive as similar Eastern adventure novels, like the medieval Arabic *Adventures of Sayf ben Dhi Yazan* or the Persian *Firuz Shahnama* of Sheik Bighami (1483). Like Hamza, the novel gets bogged down in Qaf about halfway through and never quite recovers; the last quarter is especially repetitious and boring, and the whole thing contains too many contradictions, inconsistencies, plot holes, and anachronisms to be considered great literature—no doubt the result of too many cooks spoiling the broth. In addition, there are way too many interventions by supernatural figures, conveniently rescuing our heroes from sticky situations, and Hamza's near-invincibility robs his struggles of any dramatic tension. Even his death is robbed of nobility when we are told that Allah deliberately allowed him to be killed simply because Muhammad forgot to add "God willing" after boasting "My uncle Hamza is capable of routing these armies all by himself" (903). Killed by his god on a technicality.

What delights us most is not the work so much as its narrators' attitude toward the work, which is infectiously enthusiastic. Many of the chapters begin with high-flown, self-congratulatory remarks like these:

> The florid news writers, the sweet-lipped historians, revivers of old tales and renewers of past legends, relate that . . . (3)

> The singing reed of the knowers of tales of yore, and the mellifluent quill of claimants to past knowledge thus luxuriously modulate their song, and in a thousand voices delightfully trill their notes to proclaim that . . . (9)
>
> The singers of the pleasure garden of ecstasy and the melodists of the assembly of discourse thus create a rollicking rumpus by playing the dulcimer of delightful verbiage and the lute of enchanting story . . . (53)
>
> The divers of the ocean of historiography and the excavators of the sea of ancient tales bring up the pearls of legends, and thus display them by stringing them into prose . . . (220)

The imagery always anticipates the contents of particular chapters; the last one quoted above, for example, introduces an ocean voyage and a storm at sea. The one in which Hamza prepares to ride off to India opens: "The steed of all riders of the arena of narrative, that charger of horse breakers of the field of ancient legends, thus springs with ardor and gallops through the expanse of the page, revealing that . . . (199)." Just before Hamza enters the arena for hand-to-hand combat, the narrators likewise prepare for battle: "The might of the reed is tested by the narrative's power, and the vigor of the swashbucklers of colorful accounts is now manifested in the arena of the page" (250). Book 4, which consists mostly of martial adventures, appropriately opens thus: "The warriors of the field of fables and the soldiers of the domain of legends thus gallop on the steeds of pens across the arena of the page to reveal that . . . (697).

These fanciful incipits—some added by Bilgrami, but others preserved from the older Persian versions—give the sense that the authors feel they are engaged in a narrative adventure just as challenging and glorious as Hamza's, if not more so; his exploits are imaginary, but their efforts to compose this huge book were real. "It was a spectacle of enchantment, and painstaking labor was taken to fashion it," the narrators say of a palace in Qaf (405), likewise describing their own palatial novel. When Hamza is confronted with a *tilism* (an enchanted illusion) created by a magician, we are to understand that the narrators are the true magicians, and that the novel itself is a *tilism.* Throughout the narrative, there are self-conscious expressions of its artistry, its communal creation over the centuries, and

even of its superiority to the "real" world. The narrators include many conventional acknowledgments of Allah as "the Insuperable Artist" (10), but often this is slyly followed a few pages later by something—an extravagantly crafted throne, say—that is described as "a work of art to rival the Incomparable God's Creation itself" (14). Flirting with impiety, flushed with pride in their creativity, the narrators enjoy knowing they have created a world more colorful and appealing than Allah's. "My world's better than your world," as the singer of a one-hit wonder in the 1960s boasted.[122]

But the story doesn't end there. A decade after the popular Lakhnavi/Bilgrami edition appeared, a publisher named Naval Kishar decided to bring out a complete, unabridged version of the 800-years-in-the-making communal novel. He had the best *Hamza* storytellers (a class known for its use of performance-enhancing opium) come to his printing house and recite the portions they specialized in to scribes, and the result is the longest novel in world literature: his Urdu *Dastan-e Amir Hamzah* was published between 1883 and 1917 in 46 volumes averaging 900 pages each —in other words, a novel more than 41,000 pages long! One scholar who has read the whole thing, Urdu critic Shamsur Rahman Faruqi (perhaps the *only* person to do so), says it is infinitely more impressive than the puny 900-page version, displaying

> a much larger vocabulary of both Persian and indigenous words, many of them technical; an unimaginably more sumptuous verbal texture, with far more elaborate and prolonged wordplay, and more detailed and colorful descriptions; far more colorful and resonant names; a faster movement of events, and a larger, more complex variety of incidents, outcomes, and whole subplots; a tone much more amoral; a more erotic, less scatological interest in the body; much more humor; frequent use of long letters; a greater development of the concepts of kingship and *sāhib qirānī* [Hamza's astrological destiny]; a new notion of rivalry between the "right-handers" and the "left-handers," champions who sit on either side of Hamzah's throne. . . . much less reliance on Devs and Parīs, and much more inventiveness in the kinds of characters who appear: for example, human magicians who aspire to replace God, and who have

> magic artifacts such as submarines, flying spheres, etc.; immensely powerful but almost subhuman creatures called *dīvānahs*, "madmen"; a category of *qazzāqs*, "robbers," who are occasionally led by members of Hamzah's own family. . . . [in sum, an] astonishing treasure house of romance, which at its best contains some of the finest narrative prose ever written in Urdu.[123]

This Taj Mahal of fiction leaves me speechless.

Notes

1 In modern pinyin Chinese (which I use as often as possible), *q* is pronounced *ch*; other pinyin consonants to remember are c=ts, x=sh, z=tz, and zh=j. Henceforth, P and W-G will be used to distinguish between pinyin and older Wade-Giles spellings.

2 *The Novel in Seventeenth-Century China*, xii.

3 See Wang's *Ming Erotic Novellas* for earlier examples of the genre. He dates this novel "around 1597" (98), but other scholars place it a decade later.

4 Page 38 in Hu's translation (hereafter cited by page); cf. *The Plum in the Golden Vase* 1:83 (chap. 4).

5 For a fuller description, see Van Gulik's *Sexual Life in Ancient China* (316–17). Van Gulik discusses another erotic novel written around this time, luridly intriguing, entitled *Chu-lin yeh-shih* (The Bamboo Garden), which dramatizes "sexual vampirism" (314–16).

6 Recently translated into English by Lois Fusek (U Hawaii P, 2010).

7 As Patrick Hanan demonstrates in "The Composition of the *P'ing yao chuan,*" Feng's version is very derivative, borrowing plot elements from a wide range of earlier Chinese novels and stories.

8 Chap. 7 in Sturman's translation, hereafter cited by chapter.

9 Page 6 in the Yangs' definitive translation. Feng's anthologies include several fictions that approach novella length, but given the plethora of full-length novels written at this time, I'm going to pass over them. For an especially impressive example, see "For One Penny, a Small Grudge Ends in Stark Tragedies," probably written by a contemporary of Feng's

and included in his third anthology, *Stories to Awaken the World* (*Xingshi hengyan*, 1627), no. 34. There's an alternate English translation in McLaren's *Chinese Femme Fatale* (64–101); she quotes with approval Hanan's opinion that this novella is "the best example of naturalism in late Ming fiction" and is "reminiscent of Zola" (58).

10 Pp. xxi–xxii in Philip Clart's introduction (ideographs eliminated); the novel will be cited by chapter. Dr. Clart graciously shared with me his unpublished translation of the earlier *Story of Immortal Han*; it's a first-person account that reads more like an official deposition than a novel.

11 At the end of chapter 8, Xiangzi hallucinates that Lü offers him White Peony for some sexual yoga, and there's steamy talk about his jade stalk, her flowery pond, and copulation as "a conduit of pneuma." The eager disciple should seek out Douglas Wile's translation *Art of the Bedchamber: The Chinese Sexual Yoga Classics, Including Women's Solo Meditation Texts* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1992).

12 The quotation is from page 51 of Yenna Wu's *Ameliorative Satire and the Seventeenth-Century Chinese Novel*, which devotes a few pages to this postmodern-sounding work.

13 "Traditional Vernacular Novels," 661. Berg adds: "Not much is known about Fang Ju-hao [W–G], except that he wrote another long novel in 1635, the hundred-chapter *Tung-yu chi*, also called *Tung-tu chi* (Journey to the East)" (661).

14 The novel has not been translated into English, so I'm relying on Hegel's description in *The Novel in Seventeenth-Century China*, 84–103, 106–11.

15 Again, this has not been translated so I'm basing my remarks on Hegel (112–39).

16 Translated by McMahon in his *Misers, Shrews, and Polygamists*, 75. Since the entire novel has not been translated, my description is based on McMahon (75–81) and Wu (51–54).

17 In chapter 1 of Shuen-fu Lin and Larry Schulz's fluent translation (cited hereafter by chapter), Monkey advices Pigsy, "Don't have upside-down dreams," and in the Q & A preface Tung supplied for his novel, he states, "Dream thoughts are upside-down." (The translators place this preface in back as an appendix.)

18 Some of this is lost in the current English translation, which Hegel notes isn't as literal as it could be (294 n13).

19 "I was intimidated by the weight of his rod and ran inside the cave, tightly shutting the door. I didn't know where or how he got through, but he managed to crawl into my stomach and almost took my life" (chap. 60 in Yu's translation).

20 These remarks appear in the first edition of the translation (1978) but were dropped without explanation in the revised edition of 2000. It was around this time (the 1640s) that annotated editions of the Ming fiction masterpieces began appearing; such editions of the ancient classics had been around since the Tang Dynasty, but annotating "modern" fiction was a novelty and hastened the recognition of the novel as a serious art form. See Rolston's *Traditional Chinese Fiction and Fiction Commentary* on this important development; he treats Tung's "auto-commentary" on pp. 276–78.

21 The novel's self-reflexivity, intertextuality, and foregrounding of narrative devices are explored at length in Kao's "A Tower of Myriad Mirrors" (written in 1978 but not published, due to nightmarish delays, until 1989).

22 Chapter 1 in Patrick Hanan's translation, hereafter cited by chapter. For a zany film adaptation, see *Sex and Zen* (1991).

23 Hanan, *The Invention of Li Yu*, 55—a splendid study of this fascinating writer.

24 The otherwise careful author stumbles here by stating his story takes place late in the Yuan Dynasty (1279–1368) yet introduces this and other Ming Dynasty novels into the narrative.

25 In addition to this novel, Li Yu wrote numerous plays, essays, and three collections of stories; abridged versions of the latter have been translated by Hanan as *Silent Operas* and *A Tower for the Summer Heat.*

26 Chap. 6 in Bedford-Jones's 1926 translation, made from a French translation of the Chinese published a year earlier. His title, *The Breeze in the Moonlight*, is an alternative (*Feng yue zhuan*) meaning "a romantic tale."

27 But if interested, see pp. 666–68 of Berg's "Traditional Vernacular Novels" for summaries of 10 others, and Hessnay's "Beautiful, Talented, and Brave" for a historical overview of the genre.

28 Consequently I've relied on Eve Nyren's translation of chapters 1–20 (cited by chapter), and thereafter on the 50–page plot summary in Yenna Wu's monograph on the novel (303–55). There is also a translation of chapters 68–69 by Glen Dudbridge available (see bibliography).

29 "After the Fall," 564.

30 Preface to "*Marriage as Retribution,*" 42–43, selected translations of the novel's first 20 chapters.

31 Quoted in Kuhn's introduction to *Flower Shadows*, 16 (hereafter cited by page number).

32 There is also a "stone virgin" (*shinü*) in *The Jealous Wife.* Ding explains: "This abnormal phenomenon usually occurs in innocent virgins, who have lived over-sheltered lives and whose parents have never given them any explanation of conjugal intimacy. These naïve young things go through life with their senses unawakened, their passions dormant" (342). Unsurprisingly, many of these snow cones became nuns.

33 From chap. 4 of *Xu Jing Ping Mei*, as translated by Siao-chen Hu in her essay "In the Name of Correctness," in Huang's *Snakes' Legs*, 83. Hu notes that Ding took this and other notions from a wildly popular religious tract entitled *Taishang ganying pian* (The Supreme Tractate of Actions and Retributions).

34 For a titillating overview—and for another reminder of how far ahead of European novelists the Chinese were in sexual realism—see "The Erotic Scholar–Beauty Romance," chap. 6 of McMahon's *Misers, Shrews, and Polygamists.*

35 Gang Gary Xu, "Ethics of Form: *Qing* and Narrative Excess in *Guwangyan,*" in Wang and Wei, 253; see also Wu, 290–91, and Huang's *Desire and Fictional Narrative,* 251–70.

36 It's available in a fine translation by the eminent sinologist Robert van Gulik, who went on to write numerous Judge Dee mysteries of his own. In his introduction, van Gulik notes most Chinese 'tec novels give away the criminal and motive at the beginning so that the reader can concentrate on the magistrate's detection work; *Celebrated Cases* anticipated the Western model in which the reader is kept in suspense.

37 Judge Dee reappears in China's first martial arts novel, *Green Peony* (1800); see Wan's recent book on it and on the rise of the popular

Chinese novel in general.

38 Chap. 17 in the Yangs' translation, hereafter cited by chapter. First published in China in 1957 and several times reprinted in the U.S., their translation is considered accurate and reliable, though "Some minor parts involving puns or unpleasant descriptions (of incidents involving excrement, for example) are left out" (Wong, 153). It contains only a handful of footnotes, way too few for this richly allusive text.

39 Rulin waishi *and Cultural Transformation in Late Imperial China*, 182—an excellent guide for anyone wanting to explore the novel further.

40 "Lute playing, *go*, calligraphy, and painting (*ch'in ch'i shu hua*) have been traditionally the four noble recreations of a Chinese scholar"—Hsia, *The Classic Chinese Novel*, 241.

41 Scholars have disputed whether an extant chapter 56 belongs to the novel or not. (The Yangs omitted it from their translation.) It consists of an imperial edict, a memorial to the throne, and a list of scholars who fell through the cracks in the examination system who should be awarded a posthumous degree. Similar lists appear in *The Water Margin* and *Journey to the West.* See Shang Wei (161–69) for a discussion of the controversy.

42 All of the chapter titles give away plot details. Like most artists, Wu wants the reader to focus not on *what* happens next, but *how* it happens—that is, on his artistry.

43 There is an anonymous novel from the early 18th century entitled "The Story of the Female Civil Service Examinations" (*Nü kaike zhuan*), but it's a farce: "a young literatus and his friends stage an elaborate examination for their favorite female prostitutes. Through the comic description of this staged 'examination,' the author is able to satirize various unfair practices such as cheating in the examinations" (Huang, *Literati and Self-Re/Presentation*, 195 n36). Girls are allowed to take the exams in *Flowers in the Mirror*, the last novel discussed in this section.

44 For longer discussions of Wu's attitudes toward women, religion, and superstition, see Ropp's *Dissent in Early China,* chaps. 4 and 5.

45 See the anonymous commentator on the 1803 edition translated in Rolston's *How to Read the Chinese Novel*, 258, 263.

46 *The Classic Chinese Novel,* 204–5, 209, 215, 241. Nevertheless Hsia condemns what he considers flaws in the novel, mainly some silly

scenes that sound "a note of burlesque and buffoonery that ill suits the serious comic portrayal of manners to be seen in the bulk of the novel" (219). But some critics say the same thing about Pynchon's novels; which is to say, these are not necessarily flaws.

47 Levy, *Ideal and Actual in* The Story of the Stone, 1—a highly recommended introduction for those entering the portals of the *Dream* for the first time. And for exquisite visual introductions, fatten your eyes on photographer Linda Ching's *Story of the Stone* (Ten Speed Press, 1998), and on *A Dream of Red Mansions as Portrayed through the Brush of Sun Wen* (Better Link Press, 2010), a 19th-century portfolio of silk paintings.

48 Chan, *The Authorship of* The Dream of the Red Chamber, viii.

49 Hawkes, "The Translator, the Mirror and the Dream," 17, 20.

50 Hawkes translated chapters 1–80 in three volumes (1973–80); his son-in-law John Minford translated chapters 81–120 in two volumes (1982–86). Their translation will be cited by chapter except for editorial matter, which will be cited by volume/page. The Yangs' translation is rather flat (like their *Scholars*), though more literal and fuller in spots.

51 Miller, *Masks of Fiction in* Dream of the Red Chamber, 33 n63. Miller's book is especially good at explicating the novel's complicated opening chapter.

52 The *yu* element common to their names primarily means "jade"—he's Precious Jade, she's Black Jade—but also means "desire," the thorn in the side of this novel. Plaks notes "the 'jade' of classical Chinese literature is milky-white and opalescent, unlike the greenish rock of Western jewellery" ("Leaving the Garden," 125).

53 *The Classic Chinese Novel*, 268.

54 The narrator doesn't tell us the gap was made by a disruptive demon, but Chinese readers would have known the myth. (For more on Nu Wa and stone symbolism in *DRM*, see Wang's *Story of Stone.*) The personification of the unwanted stone goes back to at least the 12th century; see Xin Qiji's poem translated in Li's *Fictions of Enlightenment*, 111–12.

55 Or elsewhere. Cao evidently knew *The Plum in the Golden Vase*—the closest Chinese predecessor to his own novel—but avoids imitating its graphic sex scenes.

56 For more on this, see Gu's *Chinese Theories of Fiction*, 169–79.

57 Here's Bao-yu's clever maid Aroma on his religious conversion: "As for all that stuff about immortality, that's just a lot of hot air. Who ever actually saw an immortal set foot in this word of ours? Some monk turns up from goodness knows where, talking a lot of rubbish, and you go and take him seriously! You're an educated man, surely you don't give more weight to his words than you do to the Master's and Her Ladyship's?" (118). I agree with Martin Huang that Bao-yu's taking of Buddhist vows "can hardly be regarded as a genuine conversion. His motive for this action is his disappointment at his present situation rather than a positive faith in religion" (*Literati and Self-Re/Presentation*, 107–8). But for an intelligent reading of the novel as a Buddhist sutra, see chap. 5 of Li's *Fictions of Enlightenment.*

58 Hawkes, introduction to vol. 1, 23.

59 Of Cao's personal life, we know he had a son who died a few months before he did. "One of his friends mentions that he left a 'new wife' behind, which seems to imply that he was twice married and that the son he lost was his child by the first wife" (Hawkes 1:22). But in Chinese society homosexuals were tolerated as long as they did their conjugal duty, so who knows?

60 Huang, *Literati and Self-Re/Presentation*, 93. Huang is excellent on the gender dynamics in *DRM*, connecting them with the dependent, "feminine" position of literati like Cao during this period.

61 The Yangs, whose translation I am quoting here (because Hawkes abridges this key passage), don't identify these works. *The Lament* (*Li sao*) is a dramatic monologue attributed to Qu Yuan (c. 340–278 bce), and like *The Nine Arguments* is from the *Chu-ci*, an anthology of poems from the early Chu kingdom. *The Autumn Flood* is presumably chapter 17 of the eponymous book by Zhuangzi (4th cent. bce), a quirky Daoist classic filled with tales and anecdotes that Bao-yu is often seen reading.

62 *Rereading the Stone*, 132.

63 See chapters 4 and 5 of Huang's *Snakes' Legs* for accounts of these, if interested.

64 See chapter 2 of her *Feminist Utopian Discourse in Eighteenth-Century Chinese and English Fiction*, where she compares it to Lennox's *Female Quixote.*

65 Hsia, “The Scholar-Novelist and Chinese Culture” (1977), rpt. in On Chinese Literature, 190.

66 Since it hasn’t been translated, my brief discussion of this novel is based on McMahon’s *Shrews, Misers, and Polygamists* (150–75), both Huang’s *Literati and Self-Re/Presentation* (109–42) and *Desire and Fictional Narrative* (236–51), and Roddy’s *Literati Identity* (149–70).

67 From Lin Tai-yi’s heavily abridged translation, p. 536 in the bilingual Yilin Press edition (hereafter cited by page; the Chinese text occupies pp. 1–527, the translation pp. 529–896). Lin’s translation, first published in 1965, represents a little over a third of the original; in the early years of this century she was given the opportunity to complete it, but she obdurately insisted her abridged version contained the essence of the novel, and that the rest merely has “to do with classical texts and discussions of the Chinese language, dissertations on history, poetry, phonetics, etc., which can be of little interest to the non-specialized reader” (17). Foiled again by a condescending translator! (She even abridges the title, which should be *The Destiny* [*yuan*] *of Flowers in the Mirror*.) I’ve also drawn on fuller (but not complete) translations by H. C. Chang of chapters 32–37 and 96–100. To avoid confusion, all references to chapter numbers are to the 100-chapter Chinese original.

68 It’s worth noting that here, as in *DRM,* the book is said to originate in the supernatural realm. In China, they call such heaven-sent books novels; in the Near East and West, they call them sacred scriptures. See Ying Wang’s essay “The Supernatural as the Author’s Sphere” for the Chinese recognition that the supernatural is not only a product of the imagination but a metaphor for the artist’s workshop.

69 Accordingly, “Feminism as Illusion” is the title of Ma’s chapter on this aspect of the novel.

70 Page 530; the images also appear in a song in chap. 5 of *DRM*. Ying Wang notes these images were also used by the Chinese to describe fiction itself (142 n31).

71 Not Li’s invention but the work of a fourth-century poetess named Su Hui. She wrote it to win her husband back from a concubine. (It worked.)

72 “The Scholar-Novelist and Chinese Culture,” 208—a fine essay on both the strengths and weakness of *Flowers in the Mirror*.

73 "*Jinghua yuan:* Where the Late Late Ming Meets the Early Late Qing," in Wang and Wei, 274. Epstein has made the best case for the novel's structural integrity (via yin-yang symbolism) in "Engendering Order."

74 In his *Songso pokpu ko*, quoted by Lee in *A History of Korean Literature*, 333.

75 Page 125 in Pihl's translation, which occupies pp. 119–47 of Lee's *Anthology of Korean Literature.* (Here, as elsewhere, I'm dropping the diacritical marks: e.g., Hŏ Kyun, *Hong Kiltong chŏn*, etc.)

76 In 1592, a megalomaniacal Japanese warlord named Toyotomi Hideyoshi invaded Korea with the idea of moving on to conquer China and the world. The unprepared Koreans sustained enormous losses at first, but with China's help managed to repulse the enemy and secure a truce in 1593. The despicable Hideyoshi then ordered a second, retaliatory attack on the Koreans, who defeated his forces in 1598 at a decisive naval battle. Though ultimately victorious, the Koreans suffered death and destruction—human, structural, cultural—on an unprecedented scale, and the war initiated their prejudice against Japan that persists to this day. (Japan has done much to Korea since then to deserve this sustained prejudice.) During the Japanese occupation (1910–45), it was dangerous for a Korean to be caught with a copy of the *Record.*

77 Pages 88–89 in Peter H. Lee's translation. (The novella exists in many different versions; Lee says the one he translated is typical; there is no definitive version.) Lee, by the way, has done more than anyone to make classic Korean literature available to English-speaking audiences.

78 Some, like Francisca Cho Bantly in *Embracing Illusion*, consider the novel a serious philosophical work, while others, like Chang Sik Yun in a dissenting essay, criticize it for not being serious enough.

79 Page 18 in Rutt's anthology *Virtuous Women*, where the novella occupies pp. 16–177. Although it lacks notes and compresses Kim's 16 chapters into seven, Rutt's translation is far superior to the one by the Reverend James S. Gale (1922), which is unfortunately the only one in print. A Christian missionary in Korea, Gale not only sanitized the novel's many premarital sex scenes, but also falsified the text by increasing the ages of the protagonists. As disturbed as most Westerners

at the idea that humans develop sexual urges at puberty, he fake-ID'd the novel's junior-high lovers into college freshwomen.

80 (Insert joke here about Shao-yu plowing the East forty.)

81 See Bantley (45–61) for more on this novel.

82 Page 185 in Kim Chong-un's translation, which occupies pp. 185–233.

83 In his bibliography under "Fiction," Lee lists the genre-defying *Hanjungnok* (1795–1805)—literally "Records Written in Silence" but available in English as *The Memoirs of Lady Hyegyong* (U California P, 1996)—by a woman who endured the intrigues of Korean royal politics. Though traditionally categorized as a court novel, Hyegyong deliberately wrote the four memoirs that comprise the work as a defense of her family, which is why it is currently categorized as history. Having read about half of it, I agree that it belongs there; the author was familiar with court novels and could have cast her memoirs in that form had she wished, but she had a different agenda. It's a remarkable work nonetheless, and recommended to students of women's autobiographies.

84 Hibbett, *The Floating World in Japanese Fiction*, 3.

85 Quoted in Shirane's *Early Modern Japanese Literature*, 30. These lines are quoted in every book on *ukiyo-e* art, but the novel itself has never been translated in full, for some inexplicable reason.

86 Keene, *World within Walls,* 174.

87 A quick reminder that in pre-Christian Japan (as elsewhere in Asia), not only was prostitution not considered immoral, but courtesans were accepted members of society, especially in the big cities like Kyoto, Osaka, and Edo (Tokyo). Their beauty, talent, intelligence, and charm meant that "courtesans were held in higher esteem than were the wholesome married women and their daughters" (Kobayashi Tadashi, "Edo Society and Culture," in Morse's *Drama and Desire*, 21).

88 Young itinerant male prostitutes were called *tobiko*—literally "flying (traveling) children"—and Robert Lyons Danly has translated the episode of Yonosuke's first encounter with them as "Flyboys" in Miller's *Partings at Dawn*, 94–95. More historical context: "During the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, homosexual relationships among men were accepted at all levels of society. In the male-dominated world of Edo, where marriage with women was a contractual rather than an emotional bond, many members of the military aristocracy retained

young men not only as loyal servants but also as bed partners. Others patronized young actors who were open to sexual liaisons (*iroko*) and who by their profession cultivated particularly alluring feminine appearances, or they sought out boy prostitutes (*kagema*) in the city's brothel districts . . ." (Asana Sugo, "Courtesans, Geisha, and Male Prostitutes," in Morse, 47).

89 As translated by Christopher Drake in *Early Modern Japanese Literature*, 50 (from chap. 1). Drake translates three chapters from the novel, which are vastly superior to the only complete English translation available, that by Kenji Hamada (which I will reluctantly cite by page number hereafter). Hamada doesn't even include this sentence in his version, which reduces the original's 54 chapters to 49 and settles for conveying the "gist" of the narrative (as he calls it) rather than replicating its innovative style.

90 From Morris's introduction to Saikaku's *Life of an Amorous Woman*, 10.

91 The names of real people are scattered through the novel, which must have given its first readers a jolt, habituated to reading older novels filled with fictitious and/or historical characters.

92 One of them, *Five Women Who Loved Love* (1686), is sometimes called a novel, but it's a collection of five novelettes connected only by a common theme. It's one of Saikaku's finest works and is available in a fluent translation by William Theodore de Bary (1956).

93 Book 1, chapter 1 in Morris's translation, which occupies pp. 121–208 of *The Life of an Amorous Woman and Other Writings.* Unfortunately, he translates only 14 of the novel's 24 chapters; two of the excluded chapters can be found in Hibbett's *Floating World in Japanese Fiction*, where he translates 10 of the novel's chapters (154–217). Drake translates 12 chapters in *Early Modern Japanese Literature* (83–120), but the same ones as the other two. (The novel is only about 150 pages long; it's ridiculous that no one has done the whole thing.) Hibbett's translation is probably the best, but since Morris's is fuller and more accessible (not to mention copiously annotated), I'll cite it by book/chapter.

94 Hibbett has an interesting essay comparing the two ("Saikaku and Burlesque Fiction"), and finds the *Amorous Woman* superior to *Moll*

Flanders.

95 In previous chapters I've used the year 1800 as the terminus for the early-modern period, but since Japan didn't embrace modernity until Commodore Perry forced it upon them in the 1850s, I'm going to conclude this section with one or two examples of each of these genres from the early 19th century.

96 Page 237 in Satchell's translation (1929). His title comes from the old idiom "to ride shank's mare," meaning to walk, and parallels the Japanese idiom *hizakurige* ([to ride the] knee chestnut horse).

97 Rimer, *Modern Japanese Fiction and Its Traditions,* 95. (The Tokugawa family of shoguns ruled Japan from 1600 to 1867.) Zolbrod made the same observation earlier in the only book-length study of Bakin in English to date (67–68).

98 Translated selections can be found in Keene's *Anthology of Japanese Literature* (423–28) and Shirane's *Early Modern Japanese Literature* (889–909).

99 The publisher of the later edition I read states the "translation is, on the whole, very faithful to the letter of the original" (5), while in his preface Greey claims his work, "which, while not a translation, follows Bakin's charming romance as closely as possible, in his own quaint style, and contains many details that author would have given had he written for foreign readers" (9), meaning it's impossible to tell what Bakin wrote and what Greey added "for foreign readers." Subsequent references will be to chapters.

100 In a later episode, Bakin likewise winks at the bookish nature of his novel when Saikei stumbles upon a large palace in an unexpected setting: "Strange thing! I must be dreaming," the priest exclaims. "This place is like one of the old Chinese palaces in the story-books" (13).

101 *Shikikei Sanba and the Comic Tradition in Edo Fiction*, 95. His enjoyable translation occupies pp. 137–92.

102 He is thought to have been assisted by a female writer/musician named Kiyomoto Nobutsuga, who first-drafted the women's dialogue and helped with the musical elements (*Early Modern Japanese Literature*, 762). There's a Nobutsuga mentioned in the novel a few times, but it's unclear whether that's her.

103 From Woodhull's translation (typography modified), which occupies pp. 197–351 of his dissertation, and hereafter cited by chapter. The Japanese original seems to have the stage directions printed in smaller type at the top of the pages.

104 Usually *sharebon,* satiric novels set in the licensed quarter, and which the government often persecuted. Shunsui didn't escape punishment: in 1841, he was arrested for his writings and many of them burned.

105 It occupies pp. 81–439 of Cyrus Stearns's *King of the Empty Plain* (2007), a superb example of scholarly translation; "Lochen" is a title meaning "Great Translator," a title Stearns deserves as well. Unfortunately, like many Tibetan scholars, Lochen Stearns often displays the gullibility of a child toward his material.

106 Page 150. The original is one long text, but Stearns divided it into 15 chapters.

107 Page 317 in Beth Newman's fluent translation. She broke the uninterrupted text into forty chapters and substituted Sanskrit for the ungainly Tibetan names (witness the author's name above), but otherwise seems to have followed the original closely.

108 Author Tshe ring dbang rgyal had to make the same decision at age 14, and opted for public life, eventually becoming prime minister and the second-most powerful man in Tibet.

109 Sayyid Qutb (1906–66), founder of the modern Islamic movement that spawned al-Qaeda, visited the United States in 1948 and more than anything else was put off by the sexual vitality of American women: "A girl looks at you," he later wrote, "appearing as if she were an enchanting nymph or an escaped mermaid, but as she approaches, you sense only the screaming instinct inside her, and you can smell her burning body, not the scent of perfume but flesh, only flesh" (quoted in Lawrence Wright's *The Looming Tower: al-Qaeda and the Road to 9/11* [NY: Knopf, 2006], 12).

110 See Arbuthnot's *Persian Portraits* (119–30) for a summary and sample translation. Clouston's *Eastern Romances* contains several self-contained selections in translation (3–190, 355–452).

111 It occupies pp. 236–352 of Clouston's *Eastern Romances*.

112 No relation to the Persian Taj al-Muluk of *King Umar al-Numan and His Two Remarkable Sons*, a novel within *The Arabian Nights*.

113 From the Qazvini-i/Rice translation, 22. This is a lovely prose translation of the poetic original.

114 The story of the manuscript is told in the translators' introduction, but as this takes the form of a memoir, it's hard to vouch for its verity. Further information on this novel has eluded me.

115 Vedantism is a branch of Hindu philosophy based on the *Upanishads*; Vaisnavism emphasizes religious devotion as the way to escape the cycle of birth and death to be united with Vishnu.

116 I'm not aware of an English translation, so I've relied on the plot summary in Sudha Rani's monograph on *Citracampu* (116–18).

117 I'll be citing Zakir's recent translation (by page). "Mir" is a title (like "Amir"), not a personal name.

118 Born into a family of distinguished retainers at the Mughal court, he was driven from his hometown of Delhi when it was attacked by a rival king, wound up in Azimabad, where he saw "both good days and bad" (xiv), then left his family behind there to find employment in Calcutta, where he was hired as a translator at Fort William College, turning out educational materials for officers of the British East India Company, including *A Tale of Four Dervishes.*

119 Pages 352–53, hereafter cited by page since the chapters are unnumbered. The 900-page novel consists of four books of around 30 chapters each.

120 Naushervan takes his name from Anushirvan (or Khosrau I, ruled 531–79), one of the greatest Persian emperors and nothing like the novel's "irresolute and fickle" king (332).

121 This incident is based on the historical Hamza's death at the battle of Uhud; the woman, Hinda bint Utbah, thus avenged her relatives whom Hamza had killed a year earlier at the battle of Badr. The historical sources say she had one of her slaves throw a javelin at Hamza, but in the novel she cuts out the middleman and does it herself.

122 "Thing in 'E' " by the Savage Resurrection (1968).

123 Paraphrased by Frances Pritchett (from a personal communication) in the extremely useful introduction to her abridged translation *The Romance Tradition in Urdu: Adventures from the* Dastan of Amir Hamzah, 27.

CHAPTER 4

The English Novel

I'faith, 'tis an Occasion of no small Satisfaction to commence this Enquiry into the Romances & Fictions of the *English*—& their antick Neighbors, the *Irish* & the *Scotch*—free at last from the Tyranny of scurvy Translators—& to reacquaint myself with the earliest Works that engender'd my Love for the Novel. O *Swift*, O *Fielding*, O *Sterne*, I hail thee after too long an Absence, keen to revel once more in your rare Inventions and pricking Raillery, along with those of your less-fam'd Countrymen. Prithee look kindly on these Efforts of yr humble Servant to blazon your Glories to the gaping Publick.

Right then. At the beginning of the 17th century, English novelists had essentially two paths before them: the high road of literary romance, or the low road of pop fiction. King of the high road was Sidney's *Arcadia*: the posthumous edition of 1593 was "the best-loved book in the English language" until 1745, according to one critic.[1] The spell of Sidney's blend of heroic romance and political allegory was recharged in the 1620s with the appearance of Barclay's *Argenis*, and again at midcentury with translations of French *romans héroïques.* This was an imported genre, as we've seen, derived from Continental romances and ancient Greek novels. The other road beckoning to English novelists began at the local market of jestbooks, cony-catching pamphlets, chapbooks about working-class heroes, crime capers, Menippean satires such as Thomas Nashe's *Unfortunate Traveller*, and bourgeois novels like those of Thomas Deloney. I'll be changing lanes often during this chapter, but let's start off on this low road of homegrown fiction.

One can track the formal transition from jestbook to comic novel in a curious novella by Robert Armin (1563?–1615), a goldsmith-turned-actor who played comic roles in Shakespeare's theatrical troupe. (It's said the role of Feste in *Twelfth Night* was written for him.) In 1600 he published a chapbook entitled *Fool upon Fool*, consisting of anecdotes about six well-

known jesters (including the famous Will Sommers, Henry VIII's comic relief), each prefaced with a bit of verse. He reprinted it in 1605 with a few changes, then after a stroke of inspiration reworked it as *A Nest of Ninnies* in 1608. Armin added a frame in which a party girl with a hangover staggers one morning over to the shack of an amateur Puritan philosopher named Sotto ("as one besotted," the narrator jokes) for advice and consolation. Having "sold all for a glass prospective [crystal ball] because he would wisely see into all men but himself," Sotto conjures up these six jesters to show the girl their gibes and gambols.[2] After each set of anecdotes, Sotto interprets them in humorless allegorical terms, warning the girl – allegorically called "the World," perhaps after the Tarot card of that name depicting a naked, dancing woman – to abandon her wanton ways. But she sees through his misreadings and, after arguing over the interpretation of the sixth jester's story, "flings out of his cell like a girl at barley-break. . . . away she gads and never looks behind her" (71).

Armin converted his simple collection of jester anecdotes into an intriguing critifiction about the act of interpretation—of life as well as of texts. To alert us that he was writing something more ambitious than a jestbook, Armin alternated styles: that of the anecdotes is relatively simple (after you blow 400 years of dust off the language) and realistic, whereas the frame is couched in cadenced, metaphoric Jacobean prose. It begins:

> The World wanton sick, as one surfeiting on sin (in morning pleasures, noon banquets, after riots, night's moriscoes [dances], midnight's modicums, and abundance of trash tricked up to all turbulent revelings), is now leaning on her elbow, devising what Doctor may deliver her, what physic may free her, and what antidotes may anticipate so dangerous a dilemma. She now begins to grow bucksome as a lightning before death, and gad she will. Riches, her chamberlain, could not keep her in; Beauty, her bedfellow, was bold to persuade her; and sleepy Security, mother of all mischief—tut, her prayers was but mere prattle. Out she would, tucks up her trinkets like a Dutch Tannakin sliding to market on the ice, and away she flings. (19)

I'm reminded of Nora Flood seeking rhetorical comfort from Dr. Matthew O'Connor in Djuna Barnes's *Nightwood*. Armin imitates the dazzling style of Shakespeare's witty fools in these passages, and even Sotto preaches in wonderfully imagistic language: "By the second [anecdote, about a jester who gets muddy] the clean fools of this world are patterned, who so neatly stand upon their ruffs and scutes that the brain is now lodged in the foot, and thereupon comes it that many make their head their foot—and employment is the drudge to prodigality, made saucy through the mud of their their own minds where they so often stick fast that Banks his horse with all his strength and cunning cannot draw them out" (54–55).

A Nest of Ninnies not only dramatizes opposing philosophies of life—the woman's hedonism versus the man's puritanism—but opposing methods of interpretation. The woman interprets some of the jesters' irresponsible actions as applicable to her lifestyle, recognizes others as "mere mirth without mischief" (54), and makes critical distinctions ("this pleases well to see one so naturally silly to be simply subtle" [69]); the man interprets every prank and pratfall as a religious parable, ignoring their primary function ("mere mirth"). The novella itself is a parable about reading and interpreting fiction: one can read the anecdotes, smile, and move on; one can pause and carefully extract further meaning from some of them; or one can overinterpret them all through the cloudy crystal ball of ideology. At any rate, the experience cheers the World up, the primary function of comic fiction; as Sotto says of his narrative method, "we mingle mirth with matter to make a please-plaster for melancholy" (48), and in the novella's final line Armin aligns the comic novelist with the court fool: a professional jester, but one who often knows better than his master what's what.[3]

The transition from jestbook to comic novel is complete in an anonymous book published a year earlier, *Dobson's Dry Bobs* (1607). "Dry bobs" originally meant light blows, ones that don't break the skin, but by this time it also meant witty pranks, and this 100-page novel concerns a number of pranks pulled by young George Dobson of Durham from childhood through college. What separates *Dobson's Dry Bobs* from other jestbooks and makes it a novel is its psychological depth and attention to detail. Before we even get to the pranks, the author sets the scene: The sister/housekeeper of an old bachelor named Thomas Pentley is alarmed at how he's squandering his

fortune, which she and her sister had hoped to inherit, and thus convinces him to take in his nephew George to raise as his heir. Thomas pegs the boy as "knavish" the moment he sees him, which the well-educated author elaborates with arguments from social determinism. Citing the proverb "That which is bred in the bone will [come out in] the flesh" and Horace's observation "*Naturam expellas furcas licet usque recurret*" [You may drive out Nature with a pitchfork, yet she will ever hurry back—Epistle 1.10], the author notes how George's natural tendency for mischief is exacerbated by the ill treatment he receives from his classmates, city kids who mock his country ways.[4] There follows a lengthy passage in which George debates with himself whether he should give in to his instinct for revenge or restrain himself for his uncle's benefit:

> Long he rested doubtful whether course to make choice of, and after much discuss and consideration he conceived that to relinquish his uncle and other his friends in such a sort were not his best booty [remedy], for one way he should thereby deprive himself of all their kind affection and do more damage and disgrace to them all, and his own good name, than all their mischievous devises could be able to effect. . . . Again, whither to run or direct his course he knew not, unless it were home to his mother, who he was persuaded would return him back with a very vengeance. And then (said he) with what face can I look upon my uncle, or any other person of my acquaintance? And to go to any other place, alas who will entertain or receive me, every stranger will suppose the truth that I am run from my friends and that therefore I am the more apt to do the same from them. If I shall taste any asperity or eager usage, this will be their imagination of me, and hereupon every man will be afraid to admit me into his house, and what then will ensue of me? If not, either to starve, beg, or steal: so that this course, upon these considerations, he rejected, as in no case to be prosecuted. (3)

Note how the author switches from third-person free indirect discourse to first-person monologue and back as George weighs his options, including his realization "they were a multitude, and he only one," which adds a tragic dimension alien to jestbooks. For those who define the novel in

sociological rather than formal terms—such as Ioan Williams, who regards "the novel as a distinctively modern, that is, a post-Renaissance form, which came into being at the point when consciousness of the individual as an end in himself and not merely as part of a larger social, political or metaphysical entity, introduced a new element into European thought" (xi)—*Dobson's Dry Bobs* is England's first modern novel (not to mention England's first public-school novel, for what that's worth).

George decides to play it both ways, to revenge himself on his schoolmates, but in such a clever manner as to maintain innocence in his uncle's eyes. From this point on, the author focuses on George's many pranks, but continues to provide the psychological motivations for them, and plots them with an attention to detail that goes far beyond the anecdotal jestbooks of the time. As a teenager, George's pranks become more mean-spirited and directed against his long-suffering uncle, but he manages to graduate and go to Cambridge; there, he keeps out of trouble for the first three years, but reverts to his knavery to win various formal debates. Caught and expelled from college, he becomes a country servant and sinks to his lowest level—beating half to death a woman who interfered with his dalliance with a milkmaid—and is saved from the gallows by his uncle Thomas. In an unconvincing ending, in which the author abandons social determinism for the formal expectations of the comic genre, George returns to Durham, mends his ways, inherits his uncle's estate after his death, and becomes a respected canon. But as Avril O'Brien says of the ending, we should cut the author some slack: "Considering the state of novelistic art at the turn of the century, and remembering that nearly every change in the pattern of the novel was a major innovation simply because the novel was, at the time, such a new vehicle for artistic expression, this structural defect should not be regarded as the serious flaw that it would be in a nineteenth- or twentieth-century novel" (69).

Dobson's Dry Bobs is remarkable not only for its psychological depths but for its almost documentary realism. (Reading this surprising novel is like stumbling across a primitive phonograph made in 1607.) Daily life in Durham is captured with lifelike fidelity—partly because many of the characters are based on folks who lived there in the 1560s, and the various settings can be traced on a map (provided in Horsman's edition)—but partly because the author takes the time to flesh his characters out, especially

Uncle Thomas, who is seen from the points of view of his sister, George, his friends, as well as from his own. Small-town life is engagingly conveyed, including the timeless conflict between townies and students. Though sophisticated and college-educated, the author doesn't look down on his provincial characters or condemn the sexual escapades of an adulteress and a few "fisgigs" (sexually active flirts), unthinkable in the High Street fiction of the time, nor is the author out to shock when he tells us casually of a milkmaid who goes off "to pull a rose" (to urinate). There's a contrast between the comic incidents and what editor Horsman calls "an unexpected elaboration of style and a frequent pedantry of language . . . with learned forms and meanings rare even in 1607" (xvii–xviii), the kind of comic clash in diction that P. G. Wodehouse milked his entire career. *Dobson's Dry Bobs* is not a great novel—I doubt author intended it to be—but it is of great importance in the development of the *English* novel, for as the author patriotically boasts in his preface, "It is no foreign translation, but a homebred subject."

Two other short novels—novelettes, really—are worth noting briefly to indicate the rapid expansion of genres in popular fiction at this time, more so in England than elsewhere. The anonymous *History of Morindos* (1609) is England's first horror novel, a macabre tale of sex, witchcraft, and decadent sinning written in baroque, purple prose. The opening sentence sets both the scene and the tone: "When Spain was nursed in the milk of paganism, virtue not known, nor God honored, there lived a people so ripe in sin that the keen edge of shame's sickle lay even ready whetted to reap them down for confusion's harvest."[5] The Spanish king, Morindos, is (like George Dobson) bad to the bone: "His birth was fatal, for when the midwife pulled him from the cradle of his conception the earth quaked and heaven rained blood; his parents ominous, the one devoured by wolves, the other burnt to death by thunder; his youth full of unlucky chances, his age tyrannous and mischievous, and all his life subject to black deeds" (1). King Morindos leads a sensuous existence, feeding his "insatiate desires" on the bodies of concubines who first "danced before him naked in their cambric smocks, the more to enkindle lust's fire" (1). One day a woman, "one of the Devil's black saints," arrives during these revels and presents a masque acted by infernal spirits. Sinfully ambitious and steeped in witchcraft,

Madam Miracola has sold her soul to the devil to become queen, and easily seduces Morindos, for "her own body she embathed and suppled with a water of such enchantment that what man soever first set eye upon her" would be enthralled. Exchanging declarations that might have come from the horror plays of the time by Cyril Tourneur and John Webster, they plight their troth and, without the benefit of clergy, go to it, "he burning in lust, she aspiring a kingdom" (1; I am as unable to resist quoting from the text as Morindos is to resist Miracola's supernatural charms). The sex is literally mindblowing, for it leaves Morindos speechless, blind, deaf, and "shapeless, and as a bear new-whelped, like a lump of flesh without fashion" (1). Thrilled to be queen, Miracola feeds her husband's senseless body to demons in gratitude, learns from them there is a catch to their contract, and after 10 months gives birth to a monstrous brood: seven girls brought forth over seven days, a childbirth so painful that the queen tears out her eyes and remains bedridden for the next 21 years.

The seven girls represent the seven deadly sins, and when they come of age the author devotes a chapter to the dramatization of each woman's particular sin, decadent fairy tales of excess that go far beyond typical medieval treatments of this theme. With a Poe-like gift for the grotesque, the author wallows in murder, cannibalism, suicide, and ingenious tortures —all accompanied by croaking ravens, walking ghosts, and other "fatal prodigies." Each woman dies horribly from her sin, at which time the queen, counting down the hours to her damnation as in Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus* (which likewise features the seven deadlies), is finally seized by "the wrathful powers of black Hell" (11) and taken to, er, black Hell. It's all gloriously over-the-top, a superb exercise in stylized horror that anticipates the Gothic novel of the 18th century. One critic has called it a "baroque masterpiece."[6]

Attempting a different kind of stylistic tour de force, a young Robert Anton (1585–?) in 1613 published his *Moriomachia*, a burlesque of chivalric romances inspired by Beaumont and Fletcher's comedy *The Knight of the Burning Pestle* (1607) but also by *Don Quixote*, the first part of which had been published in Thomas Shelton's English translation the previous year. Hijacking a minor chivalric novel by Henry Roberts entitled *Pheander, the Maiden Knight* (1595), Anton spins a silly tale of a bull that

the Fairy Queen had metamorphosed into a man named Tom Pheander after she, mistaking the bull for a heifer, tried to milk his single "teat," to the bull's enjoyment. (The novelette is rife with salacious double entendres and scatological humor.) She sends him from Fairy Land to the island of Morotopia to begin his career in knight-errantry, and like Don Quixote he is declared a madman by some farmers whom he takes for enchanted knights and by a prostitute whom he mistakes for a virtuous virgin, which inspires one of the many snide couplets the narrator scatters through the text:

> Pheander showed his judgment was but poor,
> To call her a maid that was a common - - - - -.[7]

His Fairy Queen sponsor sends him some armor by way of a "fairy lady" who bestows it instead on the Knight of the Moon after he rescues her from a "pygmy giant"; learning in a vision he has been robbed of his armor, Pheander—now dubbed the Knight of the Sun—challenges the other knight to combat, a farcical fight that ends with the Moon wrestling the Sun to the ground, whereupon a supernatural eclipse darkens the land. Suddenly turning bitter, the author spends the next five pages describing all the evils that occur in Moropolis (i.e., London) under the cover of darkness, a corrosive satire that adds an edge to this fractured fairy tale. Getting to their feet, the knights end their battle by decision, the Knight of the Moon judged to be the winner, though he of the Sun can borrow the armor when needed, which is cold comfort: "he stood like a body without a soul, or a man whose heart was fallen into his hose, or indeed like King Belin's armed stake in the fields which archers shoot at" (78), a surprisingly somber ending.

Though a minor work, *Moriomachia* is significant as the "earliest example we have of Cervantes' impact on English fiction"[8] and as an early example of what specialists of the period call the antiromance. Better examples of the genre would appear in France in the next decade beginning with Charles Sorel, but *Moriomachia* is an engaging tour de farce with a sting in its tail, and it's easy to share in the fun Anton obviously had fulfilling Pheander's wish "that hereafter historiographers shall, Roman-like, stuff out my valiant acts with the bombast of their perpetual inkhorns" (55).

The same year Anton's novelette appeared, publisher/bookseller Thomas Saunders put on sale "at his shop in Holborne at the Sign of the Mermaid" the second and concluding volume of *The English Arcadia* (1607, 1613) by Gervase Markham (1568?–1637), an author best known for his instructional manuals on horsemanship, archery, and household hints. Reading *The English Arcadia* on the merry heels of *Mariomachia*, one's impulse is to read it too as a pastiche, a send-up of Sidney's *Arcadia* that exaggerates its literary conventions and rhetorical devices to the point of parody. But its somber tone suggests otherwise, for this is Arcadia in decay.

Sidney had concluded, or more precisely, abandoned his *Arcadia* with an invitation to other authors to finish his story: "But the solemnities of these marriages, with the Arcadian pastorals, full of many comical adventures happening to those rural lovers; the strange stories of . . . Helen and Amphialus, with the wonderful chances that befell them; . . . lastly, the son of Pyrocles, named Pyrophilus, and Melidora, the fair daughter of Pamela by Musidorus, who even at their birth entered into admirable fortunes, may awake some other spirit to exercise his pen in that wherewith mine is already dulled" (630). Markham opens his tale some 20 years later, when things are going to ruin: the aforementioned Amphialus, suspecting Helen of adultery, abandoned his kingdom three years earlier and now his subjects are threatening to kill Helen. Musidorus has died, leaving his kingdom in Thessaly to his and Pamela's daughter Melidora, a "proud and disdainful dame" by her own admission,[9] whose rite of passage from snooty princess to mature woman occupies the last two-thirds of the short novel. Before he died, Musidorus created a rural retreat called Tempe, but it's now an Eden under siege: nearby is the enchanted castle of the evil magician Mysantropos, and terrorizing the pastoral neighborhood is a monstrous creature called Demagoras, guilty of "huge massacres" and "the disburdening of a few too-long borne maidenheads" (2:60r, 57v), who nearly rapes Melidora at one point. We learn at the end that, as in many pastorals, most of the shepherds and shepherdesses are aristocrats in disguise, all of whom fled here to escape romantic tragedies, which adds to the dismal atmosphere. Instead of a bucolic hideaway, Tempe is a Heartbreak Hotel where everyone has checked in under false names. Finally, most of the major characters take on further disguises at some

point, dramatizing what appears to be Markham's themes: the world as dangerous illusion, the unreliability of the senses, hence the need to obey religious authorities (in this case, a priest of Pan and a priestess of Minerva). Although there is a happy ending, it is a muted one, Demagoras's "huge massacres" rudely mentioned on the last page along with the marriage celebrations.

The English Arcadia opens exactly like Sidney's *Arcadia*—two heartbroken shepherds lament the absence of a nymph named Cynthia—and Markham imitates Sidney's magniloquent style the best he can. He's fond of fancy phrases like "with a desire and fear, or a fearful desire" (1:28a) and "with a carelessness descending from a care too carefully employed" (2:14b) that don't douse the suspicion of parody, and which in fact support Salzman's suggestion that Markham "submits certain pastoral motifs to an ironic treatment" (128), especially when two characters engage in a traditional debate about city versus country, only for the smarter of the two to praise city life (1.59v–60v). There is a funny violation of point of view—probably unintentional rather than ironic—when Pan's priest, who is filling in the visiting knight Pyrophilus on the story, tells how he was drugged once and lost consciousness, yet he continues to narrate what happened around him. But such violations are common in 17th-century writers, for whom the integrity of point of view was not yet an issue.

Although the pastoral is by definition an artificial genre, there's a heightened self-consciousness in Markham's version that Gavin Alexander picks up on: "Characters act with an instinct to conform to a pattern or an archetype, as if they have a sense of what is expected of them, as if instead of morality they have a repertoire of literary commonplaces. They feel themselves to be secondary: they are the second generation in a second generation text, the heirs of Sidney's characters as Markham is the heir of Sidney" (272). Ultimately, *The English Arcadia* is not very satisfactory: a periphrastic study in a worn-out poetical fashion (as a self-deprecating modernist once said). Then again, Markham meant to continue his work—this is only the first of what may have been five books, like *Arcadia*—so who knows where he might have gone with it. In the preface to part 1, he expressed his fears of "the innumerable tortures wherewith severe censors [book reviewers] will torment and whip me, their phews, their pishes, their wry looks, apish gestures, and untunable pronunciations," and evidently

that's what happened, for in part 2 he complains about the critics who chastised him for using *Arcadia* as a title and for imitating Sidney. He indignantly points out that many authors before Sidney used *Arcadia* for a title, and that Sidney himself was imitating Heliodorus and Montemayor. (Authors can handle unappreciative reviews; it's the uninformed, unfair ones that drive us mad.) So Markham abandoned his *Arcadia*, returning to quill self-help books such as *The English Housewife, Containing the Inward and Outward Virtues which Ought to Be in a Complete Woman* (1615).

A far more creative RSVP to Sidney's invitation to continue *The Countess of Pembroke's Arcadia* was written by his niece, Mary Wroth (1587–1653?), whose 1,100-page *Countess of Montgomery's Urania* is not only the first known English novel by a woman, but also one of the most significant novels of the 17th century. It is also one of the least known due to its unfortunate publication history. Shortly after part 1 was published in autumn 1621, a powerful nobleman detected a thinly veiled family scandal depicted in it and tried to suppress the novel.[10] The second part, which Wroth worked on until around 1626, went unpublished. It wasn't until 1991 that the first book of part 1 was reprinted (in Salzman's *Anthology of Seventeenth-Century Fiction*), and not until 1995 that all of part 1 was back in print; the previously unpublished part 2 followed in 2000. Though a superb production, this two-volume set is an expensive, old-spelling edition intended for specialists, so until a modernized, 1-volume edition appears, *Urania* will remain in the shadows along with *Astrea*, *Argenis*, *Justina*, and other literary wallflowers from this period. So let's take her for a spin on the dancefloor to show her off.

The learned Lady Wroth not only read her uncle's novel closely, but also everything he read for his chivalric pastoral: *Amadis de Gaul*, Montemayor's *Diana*, Ariosto's *Orlando furioso*, and apparently Heliodorus's *Ethiopian Story* and the pastoral that started it all, Longus's *Daphnis and Chloe*. In addition, she had the advantage of reading influential works that appeared after Sidney's death in 1586, specifically Spenser's *Faerie Queen*, the beginning of d'Urfé's *Astrea*, and most important, Shelton's translation of *Don Quixote*. Wroth doesn't parody the pastoral/chivalric novel, but Cervantes inspired her to slyly subvert it. Like *Argenis*, behind *Urania*'s scrim of medieval pageantry is a coded account of

early 17th-century politics, which may be the least interesting aspect of the novel today but which gives the work further depth.[11]

Urania's difference is apparent from the first page, where we behold a 16-year-old shepherdess in tears, not from a romantic tiff but from a crisis of identity. Urania—the name of the nymph whose departure two shepherds lament at the beginning of Sidney's revised *Arcadia*—has just been informed that she is not in fact a shepherdess but a foundling. "Can there be any near the unhappiness of being ignorant, and that in the highest kind, not being certain of mine own estate or birth?" she soliloquizes.[12] She goes into a cave to hide her sorrows, boldly explores it, and deeper within finds a supine man groaning for his lost love. (Maternal caves outnumber phallic towers in this gynocentric novel.) Instead of panicking at finding herself unchaperoned in the presence of a strange man, as in most romantic novels of the period, she summons "a brave courage" and kneels down to ask him what his problem is, and after he explains how he lost his true love, she tells him to man up, to quit crying like a girl and go avenge her death. This role reversal is startling, as is her willingness a little later to offer a lost lamb (an emblem of Christian sacrifice in Spenser) to a starving old man. As *Urania's* editor Josephine Roberts wittily puts it, "Wroth's sudden shift from Lamb of God to lamb chops reveals a rupture between the world of high idealism and that of hard, pragmatic circumstance" (xxiii). Wroth toys with pastoral conceits, playing along with them on one page by pretending Urania creates daylight by opening her eyes (18), but on the next explaining the real reason why a ravenous wolf stops in her tracks before the beautiful shepherdess: "one might imagine seeing such a heavenly creature did amaze her, and threaten for meddling with her: but such conceits were vain, since beasts will keep their own natures, the true reason being, as soon appeared, the hasty running of two youths, who with sharp spears soon gave conclusion to the supposed danger, killing the wolf as she stood hearkening to the noise they made" (19). And then we're treated to a lengthy and rather sexy description of these two strapping teens in their tight, revealing forest outfits, with details of the sort previously used only by male authors to describe beautiful girls: "their skin most bare, as arms and legs and one shoulder, with part of their thighs. . . ." (19–20).

In addition to reorienting the pastoral from a male perspective to a female one, and shifting from idealism to pragmatism, Wroth includes within the opening 20 pages the first of innumerable interpolated tales (that of the supine sissy, named Perissus), which links Urania's crisis of self-identity to the related problem of female self-determination. Perissus tells Urania that his beloved Limena had been given away by her father to a lout named Philargus, who grew jealous of Perissus and took it out on his mild wife. (Continuing the role reversals, Limena remained calm and "judicial" during all this while the two men gushed and roared.) Limena is the first of many women in *Urania* who are prevented by men from choosing their own lovers and lives, who acquiesce to masculine authority and suffer as a result. Giving the reader little time to adjust to these reorientations, Wroth fills the next 20 pages with a dozen or more new characters: first, Urania meets Parselius, Prince of Morea, who has traveled to her island in search of the lost sister of his friend Amphilanthus, Prince of Naples, and suspects Urania may be her. Urania says goodbye to her foster parents and leaves with this stranger, at which point Wroth begins spinning a web of further interpolated tales and interrelationships, a pirate abduction, several murders, some not-so-surprising revelations—as in most pastorals, every shepherd is an aristocrat in disguise, every woman the princess of some kingdom—an attempted rape, a shipwreck, even a homosexual anecdote. Only when the ship Urania is taking to Naples is blown off-course to the island of Cyprus does the roller-coaster narrative slow down, only to throw us for another loop.

There on Venus's isle, the mode switches from the relatively realistic to the magical. Urania and the others view three allegorical towers representing desire, love, and constancy, and then drink the local water and go a little crazy, whereupon the author abandons the title character and transports us to Greece to introduce us to the *real* protagonists of the novel, the aforementioned Amphilanthus and his cousin, Princess Pamphilia of Morea, Parselius's sister. Most of the rest of the novel circles around their stalemated relationship—they love each other, but each fears the other loves someone else, and indeed many others are attracted to them—set against a proliferating number of subplots and interpolated stories involving over 200 characters. Urania reenters the story from time to time, but *Urania* is primarily about the poet Pamphilia's passion.

"O love," Pamphilius apostrophes at one point, "what strange varieties are here?" (1:244) after she listens to a jilted woman's tale of how her brother Parselius "forgot" that he had married and impregnated her recently. Baffled by love's ways, suffering from "daintiness and fear" (1:190), pusillanimous Pam is paralyzed by indecision. She hears enough stories of the unhappiness that results when parents choose women's husbands for them to know that traditional system doesn't work—Wroth herself was forced into an unhappy marriage at an early age—yet she hears even more stories of women making bad choices, led astray by men who will say anything to get into their petticoats: "what should we trust, when man the excellentest creature doth excel in ill?" (1:228). (To be fair and balanced, Wroth also features a number of scheming women who fool men into marrying them and then destroy them, or betray them in some other deceitful way.) Nor can Pamphilia follow the example of a naked woman named Alarina bathing in a river, who tells her how she decided to forsake men and lead a Thoreauvian life in the woods. Weighing this alternative (and using telling political imagery), Pamphilia asks herself:

> can thy great spirit permit thee to be bound when such as Alarina can have strength to master and command even love itself? Scorn such servility, where subjects sovereignize; never let so mean a thing overrule thy greatest power; either command like thyself, or fall down vassal in despair. Why should fond love insult or venture in thy sight? let his babyish tricks be prized by creatures under thee, but disdain thou such a government. Shall blindness master thee and guide thee? look then sure to fall. Shall wayward folly rule thee? look to be despised. Shall foolish wantonness entice thee? hate such vice. Shall children make thee follow their vain tricks? scorn then thyself and all such vanities. Yet when all this is said, and that the truest knowledge tells me these are true, my wounded heart with bleeding doth profess vassalage to the great and powerful might of love. I am a prisoner; guard me then, dear love, keep me but safely free from yielding, and keep me, as thou has already made me, thine. (1:225)

Pamphilia is later disappointed to learn Alarina gave up her independent life to get married. Unable to act, this prisoner of love wants to listen. On the

same page, Pamphilia asks her friend Limena: “speak then of love, and speak to me, who love that sweet discourse (next to my love) above all other things . . . let me but understand the choice varieties of Love, and the mistakings, the changes, the crosses; if none of these you know, yet tell me some such fiction, it may be I shall be as luckless as the most unfortunate; show me examples, for I am so void of hope, much less of true assurance, as I am already at the height of all my joy” (1:225). Wroth shows us examples, dozens and dozens of them, most of which focus on “the mistakings, the changes, the crosses” in relationships, rather than (as in chivalric fiction) the routine obstacles that are overcome in due course in time for the wedding celebrations on the final page. Periodically Pamphilius is in a position to act on her love when sitting next to Amphilanthus—or in one instance, during a picnic, when he is “laying his head on Pamphilia’s gown, which she permitted him to do”—but she freezes: “she that now might have her wish yet refused that happy proffer for her delivery; modesty and greatness of spirit overruling her. . . . she did amiss in being so secret, as locked up her loss instead of opening her blessing.” Once again, Pamphilia prefers to listen to love stories rather than act in one: “Then variety of love came among them, I mean the discourses in that kind, everyone relating a story” (1:245).

Part 1 of *Urania* goes on like this for 660 pages, with countless love stories (mostly unhappy) set against political turmoil in the Mediterranean region as the male characters fight in various battles to expel usurpers and restore kingdoms to their status quo, and/or participate in brutal jousts, often at the request of a distressed lady. (These affairs of politics and honor are settled much more quickly than the affairs of the heart.) Published the same year as Burton’s *Anatomy of Melancholy*, *Urania* is an anatomy of love, cataloguing the countless ways women in particular handle “the most burdenous, tormenting affliction that souls can know, Love,” which is castigated as “only a senseless passion . . . at best but a sportful madness” (1:231, 423). It challenges traditional ideas of constancy, obedience, and the restricted roles women were expected to play, in fiction as well as in life. Most of Wroth’s women suffer, and the few that don’t aren’t exactly role models: one unnamed woman enjoys a marriage of convenience while entertaining a lover on the side, which her husband tolerates. (Amphilanthus listens to the story without disapproval.) Another nameless

woman takes lovers as needed, which a male character finds refreshing: " 'Give me such a lady still,' he said, 'that needs no business to woo her, but merrily yields love for love, and rather before than after it is asked' " (1:407), but she's no good because she keeps her discarded lovers in a dungeon. Similarly, another man is grateful to a sexually proactive woman named Lycencia "for she wooed, and he had now the labor saved of courting, loving, and all the other troubles" (1:624), but the author kills off this licentious woman for "loving all mankind." At the opposite end is the virginal Pamphilia, who grows old saving herself for Amphilanthus; she begins dressing in black and neglecting her appearance, becoming "the sad example of forsaken love" (1:463). She is even mocked by a lusty young shepherd, appositely named Sildurino (Hard Wood), for retaining her virginity for so long: "O heavens, what a sweet face is there, and what pity it is you should be so long a maid?" (1:570). Her devotion to the ideal of constancy seems as mad as Don Quixote's devotion to chivalry, which is reinforced when we learn at the end of part 1 that the enchantment that nearly kills Amphilanthus is the work of an early girlfriend of his, whose "constancy" takes the form of stalking and black magic. With understandable bitterness, the author notes the double standard at work here: "when did anyone see a man constant from his birth to his end? Therefore women must think it a desperate destiny for them to be constant to inconstancy, but alas this is women's fortunes . . ." (2:23).

"My ears now open to all complaints and complainers" (1:546), Wroth provides a space for women to air their grievances, which go far beyond the storybook sorrow expressed by other romantic heroines of the period and which give *Urania* its tone of modernity, despite the chivalric trappings. Most of her women are not inexperienced virgins but unhappily married women, and their complaints have the ring of truth. In her extensive annotations, editor Roberts notes that many of sob stories were drawn from the experiences of Wroth and her female friends, confirmed by early readers (like the baron who tried to suppress it), and metafictionally hinted at within the novel: at one point Pamphilia tells of an incident, "feigning it to be written in a French story," which her auditor suspects is autobiographical because it "was something more exactly related than a fiction" (1:499, 505). The exactness of Wroth's insights into "women's fortunes" is apparent in her treatment of Pamphilia, who suffers not merely from unrequited love

but from debilitating, Wallace-grade depression. She is often almost literally paralyzed by depression, stricken in a chair or bedridden, and in numerous soliloquies and complaints she mentally tortures herself trying to understand why Amphilanthus treats her the way he does (which is indeed a mystery) and why she seems to be *punished* for her constancy. Surfacing throughout the novel—"being alone she thus began, or rather continued her complaints which could have no new beginning never having end" (1:467)—these monologues have a psychological depth that is unusual in the fiction of the time, and exemplify the turn toward interiority in some 17th-century novels.

Like the woman who takes and discards men as needed, Wroth takes a casual approach to the male conventions of chivalric/pastoral fiction. For structural purposes she uses the interlacement pattern that had been in use since Arthurian fiction, weaving between multiple storylines like a soap opera, avoiding the big climax that characterizes male-authored novels (epic battle/finding the grail/group marriage) in favor of little peaks and valleys. Amphilanthus's escape from an enchantment at the end of part 1, which seems positioned as a climax, is told briefly at second hand, and leads seamlessly into part 2 without even a paragraph break, or a wedding ring for Pamphilia. Similarly, a war with Persia looms as the climax to part 2, but is disposed with long before the novel ends (or stops: Wroth didn't finish the novel.) In the spirit of an adult joining in on a children's game, Wroth plays along with the rules of the chivalric genre with Cervantine subversion. Winking that it is "impossible for knights and ladies to travel without adventures" (1:397), she lets the genre generate her material: every time a knight walks by a seashore, he encounters a woman alone in a boat approaching the shore to ask for his assistance; every time anyone goes hunting, someone with a distressing story is flushed from the woods; almost every sea voyage ends in shipwreck or piracy. Countless coincidental meetings strain credulity, even the credulity of a character who notes "the rareness: that they should thus from so many diverse parts meet all here, as in a third place, to make the wonder greater and stronger" (2:220). There are supernatural elements, increasingly so as the novel progresses: enchanted palaces, seers, griffin-like creatures, fairies, wood nymphs, giants, dwarfs, even what sounds like a UFO.[13] There's a Lady of the Lake

and a sword in the stone right out of Arthurian myth. Many of these are standard for the genre, of course, but often Wroth uses chivalric conceits for metaphoric purposes: in *Urania*, a "Dungeon of Despair" is both a psychological state and an actual place, and just as Don Quixote blames all his problems on "enchanters," Wroth wryly notes "we must attribute all to enchantments, when certainly they are a devilish kind of *natural* charm, which leads men to unworthy ways" (2:329, my italics).

Wroth also has some fun with the flowery language of pastoral, pushing personification to goofy lengths ("he discerned a man come from under the rocks that proudly showed their craggy faces, wrinkling in the smiles of their joy for being above the sea, which strove by flowing to cover them" [1:84]), parodying the effusive language of the court, and indulging in puns, sarcasm, and black humor. Her funniest parody of the rhetoric of chivalry that some writers, like Gervase Markham, were still using comes near the beginning of part 2, when Pamphilia's brother Rosindy tells of his encounter with a madwoman dressed like a storybook shepherdess who began speaking to him "but whether prose or verse I cannot tell. But her speech savored something to me . . . of some poetry, though old, sickly stuff, as if poetry were fallen into a consumption, at least in that poor, fruitless place of wits to have birth in, and friendless to be nourished in" (2:34). By this time, the chivalric novel was over 200 years old, and despite the intellectual upgrade Sidney gave it, the genre had deteriorated from beautiful stylization (as in Sannazaro's *Arcadia* [1504]) to shopworn clichés, which an intelligent and bitter woman like Wroth couldn't allow to pass without some ribbing. She throws in some crossdressing escapades—one of them recalls those in *Astrea* where Celadon fondles his beloved with lesbian gusto (1:435)—and several occasions in which a woman strips (or is stripped), apparently intended for those Wroth bluntly addresses as "you men" (1:413).[14] For the ladies, she arranges for two knight to swordfight "naked" (i.e., only in their nightshirts): "Well was this liked, and so performed. Then did Leonius and the castle lord fight so daintily and valiantly as never was any combat like it, naked men gravely performing what discourses or romances strive with excellentist witty descriptions to express in knights armed, curious in their arming and careful. Here is no defense but valor and good fortune; armor but delicate shirts, and more

delicate skins; shields but noble breasts of steel sufficient, being strong in worth" (1:475).

The reference to "romances" is one of many metafictional moments when Wroth comments on the genre, usually disparagingly, as though it's silly to treat real-life problems in such an artificial medium. Pamphilia reads a little of one romance about "the affection of a lady to a brave gentleman, who equally loved, but being a man it was necessary for him to exceed a woman in all things; so much as inconstancy was found fit for him to excel her in, he left her for a new"; disgusted, "threw she away the book" (1:317). In a novel in which everyone sports pastoral names, one female character rebels: "Must her sacred virtue be tried like other questionable, or she be named as if in a romancy that relates of knights and distressed damsels the sad adventures?" (1:595). On the other hand, another woman is content to turn her story into a pastoral ballad, giving her acquaintances pastoral names (1:613–23), just as Wroth did with *her* acquaintances for the purpose of her novel. The most stunning metafictional twist—and I mean it literally stunned me with amazement—occurs at the beginning of part 2, when Wroth switches back again to the supernatural mode. (Although part 2 picks up exactly where part 1 left off, it takes place a dozen or more years later.) While mournfully wandering one day, the widowed Selarinus—one of the two buff shepherds who rescued Urania from the wolf at the beginning and later became a king—encounters yet another enchanted palace inhabited by a "grave lady" seer. There are some references to Christian magic, whereby the dead ascend to heaven and "look down" on the living (2:5), and then Selarinus encounters a beautiful woman, who begins to tell her story. Here we go again, the reader thinks, episode 103 of the Real Housewives of Arcadia. Her story is similar to many we've heard, and when Selarinus predictably offers his knightly service, she hits him with this:

> "I thank you, Sir," said she, "but serve me only this: to believe this but a fiction, and done to please and pass the time away with, and many of these shall you see and be beguiled with before you part hence. Therefore credit nothing but the grave lady, who is oftentimes deluded by us vain spirits here, who delight in ourselves only in abusing mortals."

> With that Selarinus found himself but at the old sandy gateway where he came in, and there was fain to stay till the lady sent for him, charging him no more to follow vain fantasies there, for it was a place wholly for delusions, and what he desired to have: if music or what else, he should have it so as he would tell her of it.
>
> "And happy it is," said she, "that you met these gentle spirits, for here are some most devilishly dangerous, but from me you shall have all real dealings, and what you can desire, if you will be contented." (2:10).

Of course all characters in novels are "spirits," but it is rare for an author to throw a bucket of water in our face to remind us so. Wroth does so for a reason; fiction is "a place wholly for delusions," and while some novelists offer "vain fantasies," some "devilishly dangerous," Wroth promises "real dealings." In this magical episode, she warns us against complacency and demonstrates she still has a few tricks up her sleeve.

And like all pastoral and most chivalric novels, *Urania* is marbled with poetry and songs. Pamphilia in particular formalizes her feelings in numerous poems, and in fact the original edition of *Urania* concluded with a separately-paginated sonnet sequence entitled *Pamphilia to Amphilanthus*, omitted for reasons of space from Robert's modern edition but available in her edition of *The Poems of Lady Mary Wroth* (85–142). Amphilanthus condescendingly praises Pamphilia's poetry as "the best he had seen made by woman" (1:320) but chides her for being a lover only in poetry, not in her life, which she weakly disputes, once again sublimating her true feelings. Many of the other female characters—plus a few men—also write poetry, finding in art the satisfaction they cannot find in life, and representing the entrance of women into the lists of literature, still a novelty at the time.[15]

Part 2 of *Urania* is less impressive than part 1, though it is unfair to criticize it too harshly because it is merely a working draft, with gaps left in the manuscript for later insertions (of poems, characters' names, etc.,), and is missing a few crucial pages near the beginning in which Amphilanthus evidently has a quickie affair. The manuscript ends midsentence after 418 pages, but whether Wroth abandoned it or meant to end it thus is uncertain: Sidney abandoned the revised *Arcadia* midsentence, and some critics, like

Gavin Alexander, suggest that Wroth may have did likewise in imitation/homage, as well as for thematic reasons: "Amphilanthus' centrifugal restlessness cannot be reconciled to Pamphilia's centripetal constancy; the plot conspires to prevent any lasting union and break up any temporary accord" (303). If deliberate, *Urania*'s nonending would anticipate some modernist works that also break off midsentence (see p. 817n273 below). There are two story arcs that loosely bind the episodic narrative: the search for some young lost royals by the aging knights of part 1, which has a getting-the-band-back-together vibe, and a threatened attack by the usurper of the Persian throne, who is infuriated at Pamphilia's rejection of his marriage proposal, by which Wroth shows that romantic problems can cause political as well as personal turmoil. Tedium sets in as one episode follows another, and another, like a long-running soap opera, which Wroth tries to alleviate by some jump-the-shark tactics: relying on more supernatural events, spreading the plot over a wider geographic area, and introducing some comic relief in the person of the flibbertigibbety Marquise of Gargadia. There are some striking passages, some metafictional nods to the conventions of the "old fictions" Wroth is following (2:203), and some self-reflective praise for women who like books. This includes not only Pamphilia—"only books about her, which she extremely loved" (2:270)—but also a young queen who owns an enviable library (2:170). (Like many of the princesses in *Urania*, she's 14, which one male says is "the desired age of all great men's desires" [2:170]). But even in its unfinished state, part 2 is consistent with the entire novel's ongoing interrogation of the vicissitudes of love, the problem of constancy, and the difficulty women experience trying to negotiate these challenges in a society that robs them of much choice in the matter.

Two other spirits responded to Sidney's invitation to continue his *Arcadia*. In 1624, Richard Beling published *A Sixth Book to the Countess of Pembroke's Arcadia*, which was added to the 1627 edition of Sidney's novel and to many others up to the early 20th century. Unlike Wroth's imaginative work, Beling's novella merely ties up some loose plot ends concerning three of the couples Sidney mentions in his final paragraph. It's memorable for the sensuous way the heroine punctuates her speech: "At length Helen, gracefully shaking her head as if she would shake away drops that, like the morning dew on full ripe cherries, hung on her rosy cheek: 'O Amphialus!'

she said, and then kissed him, as loth to leave so perfect a sentence without a comma; 'I will not say you were unkind, but—,' and there with his lips (loth, loth, belike to accuse him) she closed up her speech."[16]

A bit longer, and a bit better, is *A Continuation of Sir Philip Sidney's* Arcadia (1651) by Anna Weamys (pronounced Weems), who evidently wrote the novel in her teens.[17] Like a determined matchmaker, Weamys focuses on four loving couples left unmarried at the end of book 3 of Sidney's revised *Arcadia*—including his principal ones, Musidorus+Pamela and Pyrocles+Philoclea—and manipulates her paper dolls toward the group wedding that occurs about two-thirds through the short novel.[18] After some comic relief supplied by the ditsy Mopsa, Weamys brings in Strephon and Claius, the two shepherds whose loquacious laments open the new *Arcadia*: the shepherdess Urania, the object of their affection, has agreed to allow Musidorus and Pyrocles decide which of them she'll marry. After the lovesick swains make their cases, the princes chose young Strephon; old Claius dies of a broken heart, as does the melancholy poet Philisides (Sidney's persona), and Weamys ends her novel on that sad note, reminding us that even Eden comes to grief: *Et in Arcadia ego*.

Weamys is clear about her motive: like Markham and Beling, she mentions Helen's laments for the comatose Amphialus (the third of her four couples), but skips over them: "I will only rehearse those particulars that united those rare persons together to both their abundant felicity" (27). She's uninterested in Sidney's heroic ideals except insofar as they relate to women, which means achieving an ideal marriage, and skips over fight scenes ("Then entered they into so fierce a fight that it goes beyond my memory to declare all the passages thereof" [60]), though she seconds Sidney's view that nobility extends to animals: after Musidorus knocks the villainous Plaxirtus to the ground, the latter's horse, "for joy that he was eased of such a wicked burden, pranced over his disgraced master, and not suffering him to die such an honorable death as by Musidorus's sword, trampled out his guts, while Plaxirtus, with curses in his mouth, ended his hateful life" (60–61). Weamys's style is simpler than that of Sidney (and other Arcadians), which may be due to the author's youth, but is more likely a deliberate choice. At one point, Helen struggles with the right style for her letter to Philoclea: her first draft "was not sufficiently adorned with rhetoric

for so rare a Princess" (35), but she's critical of her rhetorically adorned final draft, which may be a critique of the elaborate style employed by Sidney and his followers. Weamys's *Arcadia* is not a great novel, but (unlike Markham and Beling) she makes Sidney's themes her own: a hopeful bride's vision of Arcadia, not a bitter widow's, like Wroth's admittedly greater novel.

I've often noted during this history of the novel that the appearance of a massive masterpiece tends to silence the field for a while. After the publication of Wroth's *Urania* in 1621, no major English novels appeared for three decades, although a number of interesting minor ones sprouted up as novelists continued to explore different genres. In the 1620s, an Anglican bishop named Francis Godwin (1562–1633) wrote the first British science-fiction novel, published posthumously in 1638 as *The Man in the Moon*. Set at the end of the 16th century, it is the first-person account of a distressed Spanish nobleman named Domingo Gonzalez—a little man with big ambitions—who, after a series of unfortunate incidents, winds up on the island of St. Helena, where he invents a method of aerial transportation via wild swans. On a ship back to Spain to share his invention with the king, he is attacked by an English fleet near the Canary Islands, and escapes via his swan-powered craft: it happens to be their migration period, so they take him on a 12-day journey to the moon. Gonzales discovers it is inhabited by gigantic, long-living humanoids who enjoy a perfect, conflict-free existence. After two years there, missing his wife and family, Gonzales obtains permission to return to Earth in 1601; he lands in China, where he is initially suspected to be a sorcerer, but then is taken under the wing of a Mandarin and eventually turned over to some Jesuits, who listen to his story and encourage him to write it down, promising to return him to Spain. Despite Gonzalez's often-declared intention to write a second part, we hear nothing more of him, which is highly suspicious: early in the novella, eager to reveal the secrets he learned on the moon, Gonzalez says he will postpone "publishing these wonderful mysteries till the sages of our state have considered how far the use of these things may stand with the policy and good government of our country, as also with the Fathers of the Church,

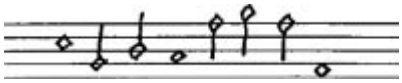
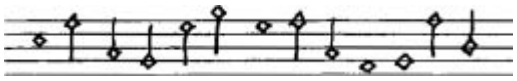
how the publication of them may not prove prejudicial to the affairs of the Catholic faith and religion. . . .”[19] Since Gonzalez’s report is highly “prejudicial to the affairs of the Catholic faith”—Godwin’s Lunars are essentially Protestants—there’s every reason to believe the Jesuits deep-six him.

Although *The Man in the Moon* belongs to the utopian genre popular at the time—only set on the moon rather than on an imaginary island at the bottom of the Earth—it really is an early example of “science” fiction because of Gonzalez’s detailed, Robinson Crusovian account of how he invented his flying machine (he even has a black assistant) and the empirical methodology he applies during his space trip. As he escapes Earth’s orbit en route to the moon, he makes informed observations on gravity and celestial mechanics, pouring scorn on philosophers who merely speculate on such matters without scientific evidence. He tentatively accepts Copernicus’s theories at a time when they were still consider heretical by the Catholic church, makes several accurate predictions of modern scientific advances, and limits his lunar observations to matters he can convey with precision. His style is deliberately flat, eschewing fanciful imagery even when commenting on the unearthly wonders of the moon and its inhabitants, which adds to the illusion this is a realistic account. Even though Godwin was an Anglican bishop, he knew he was in the middle of a scientific revolution and displays an enlightened attitude toward the latest discoveries, unlike his Catholic counterparts in Spain and Italy. From the preface onward, he also makes enough references to the New World to suggest his dwarfish Spaniard’s “discovery” of an inhabited moon is an allegory for the Spanish “discovery” of America, here reimagined as a positive encounter—Gonzalez admits the moon is “a very paradise” (100) and respectfully leaves it unspoiled—rather than a genocidal, imperialistic disaster.

And *The Man in the Moon* really is a novel—not a utopian mind-game or a Keplerian *somnium*—because of Godwin’s focus on character development. The narrators of most utopian novels are faceless everymen, but Godwin created a fully rounded character: he made him a Spaniard so that he could take advantage of certain stereotypes (proud, Catholic, but good observers); he made him short for practical reasons (easier for the

swans to transport) but also to contrast his short stature with his big ego, which is put in its place when he encounters the gigantic Lunars, whose otherwise perfect society discriminates against little people; and he made Gonzalez a family man: even though we hear little about his wife and children, Gonzalez misses them and feels responsible for them, which is the basis for requesting permission to return to Earth. This may just be an excuse—Gonzales seems to feel the moon is *too* perfect, preferring the messiness and drama of Earth-life, and of course his short size prevents any advancement there—but even that adds an extra dimension to his personality. Despite all the lunar wonders that Godwin ingeniously invents, the novel is about "the man" in the moon, not the moon.

One of those wonders is the Lunarian language; with a bow to Chinese (which Godwin knew about, though he didn't speak it), the Lunars speak in musical tones rather than words, as our wee narrator explains:

> For example, they have an ordinary salutation among them signifying (*verbatim*) "glory be to God alone," which they express, as I take it, for I am no perfect musician, by this tune without any words at all.
>
>
>
> Yea, the very names of men they will express in the same sort; when they were disposed to talk to me before my face so as I should not perceive it, this was "Gonzalez":
>
> 
>
> (103)[20]

We saw earlier how both Cyrano de Bergerac and Casanova adapted this linguistic innovation for their own sci-fi novels, and it's been suggested that Swift picked up a few ideas from Godwin for *Gulliver's Travels*. The intriguing novella went through several printings, was translated into several languages—Grimmelshausen did the German version—and remains to this day one of the most important early examples of science fiction.

The occasional comic novel still pops up during this period; there's an anonymous one called *The Pinder of Wakefield* (1632), an adaptation of several old stories about a live wire named George a Greene, but it doesn't improve upon *A Nest of Ninnies* or *Dobson's Dry Bobs*. (A pinder is in charge of a town's pinfold, where stray animals are kept until claimed.) Like Dobson, George is a prankster, and directs most of his pranks against annoying folks: a scold, a usurer, a litigious knave, a liar, a Puritan. Mostly George and his "crew" exchange amusing stories about the butcher, the baker, the candlestick-maker, and it must have been fun for middle-class readers to read about characters like themselves: Tom the taborer, Cuthbert the cobbler, Stitch the tailor, Tobit the thresher, Miles the miller, Smug the smith, et al. There are songs throughout, and even Robin Hood makes an appearance near the end of this merrie olde English panto.

In 1640, two writers who probably noted the regular reprints during the 1630s of Elizabethan romances by Robert Greene, Thomas Lodge, Emanuel Ford, and even John Lyly, attempted to take advantage of their continuing popularity, with interesting results. The otherwise unknown Alexander Hart, apparently dazzled by the linguistic sheen of Lyly's *Euphues* (reprinted in 1630, 1631, and 1636), published *Alexto and Angelica*, a novella written not in euphuistic prose but in an learned style full of recondite allusions, Latin quotations, and fanciful metaphors à la Lyly. Set in timeless antiquity, the thin plot concerns a Greek nobleman who falls in love with a Roman woman solely by report. His worldly friend Sandrico warns him about women's mutability, but Alexto insists on traveling to Rome to meet Angelica, who welcomes his courtship but dumps him after she receives a better marriage offer from the Duke of Aragon. She taunts heartbroken Alexto by inviting him to what he thinks is a reconciliation but turns out to be her marriage ceremony; but later that day, "a buzzing horror did possess her ears," informing her that she really preferred Alexto after all, so she throws herself off the battlements, "and so with the fall was battered all in pieces."[21] After Alexto defeats Aragon in a duel, he and Sandrico light out to join "certain Jews in the west part of India called Espi, who will eat no flesh, drink no wine, nor use the company of any woman . . ." (421).

Alexto and Angelica is a rather bloodless rhetorical exercise, smelling too strong of the lamp, as Tristram Shandy would say. In his preface Hart

implies he wrote it when younger, and seems to have regarded it as a vehicle to show off his college education and various poems he had written, including one near the end that rips off Donne's famous "Song" ("Go and catch a falling star . . ."). It is interesting only insofar as Hart seems to be questioning the validity of metaphor and literary representation, even as he indulges in it: "why should I with metaphorical phrase adorn the feature of your authentic self, which nature cannot parallel?" Alexto asks Angelica upon meeting her (384), after adorning her with metaphorical phrases for the last dozen pages. Sandrico encourages Alexto to write her a letter because "ladies delight in praising fictions as hearing their beauties extolled though undeserved, and again poetry is a second nature to make things seem more exquisite than they were first framed by nature" (392). Hart seems to be condemning the very kind of novel he's writing for its exquisite artificiality and undeserved beauty; like Angelica, the Lylylian romance is pretty on the outside but rotten within. It's as though he didn't want to jump on the Elizabethan bandwagon but to run it off the road, to leave it "battered all in pieces" like devilish Angelica.

Miscellaneous writer Richard Brathwaite (1588?–1673) went another way, abandoning artificiality for greater verisimilitude. His modern editor calls *The Two Lancashire Lovers; or, the Excellent History of Philocles and Doriclea* (1640) "an intriguing experiment in prose fiction in which Brathwaite nudged the conventional romance love-story into contemporary times by leavening it with realistic elements which anticipate the novel."[22] The title says it all: Philocles and Doriclea are typical romantic names, but to a London reader a romance set in Lancashire, of all places, would be as jarring as a modern novel called "Romeo and Juliet in Nebraska." The opening chapters are promising: Philocles is a distressed scholar who accepted a position as tutor to Doriclea, the dutiful but independent daughter of an upper-class family, and now of marriageable age. Predictably, the couple falls in love but meets opposition from the girl's parents, enlightened enough to provide her with a good education but snobbish enough to dismiss a lowly scholar as an improper match for her. (This tutor–pupil relationship anticipates those in later novels like Rousseau's *Julie* and Laclos's *Dangerous Liaisons*.) The rest of the novel concerns their attempts to outwit her parents—secret letters, crossdressing

rendezvous, servant accomplices—who finally come around when they learn that Philocles also belongs to the gentry.

Brathwaite occasionally updates his Elizabethan prose with some Caroline idioms and proverbs, and isn't afraid to toss in some dialect, as when a local fop visits Doriclea to propose marriage: "Yaw, Jantlewoman, with the saffron snood, you shall know that I am Master Camillus, my mother's anely white boy [favorite]. And she wad han you of all loves to wad me: and you shall han me for your tougher [dowry]." Doriclea dismisses him in kind—"Fie, young gentleman, will such a brave spark as you, that is your mother's white-boy, undo your hopes in marrying such a country Joan as I am?" (4)—but she reverts to romantic-heroinese for most of the novel, a symptomatic problem. Though Brathwaite occasionally nudges his novel toward realism (a doctor examines a urine sample from Doriclea), he keeps falling back on older forms and locutions, especially during the novel's many stagy soliloquies. He seems to be aware of the artificiality of these conventions, for he concludes one soliloquy: "Thus discoursed constant Doriclea with her Philocles, in the absence of her Philocles" (19); but every modern, realistic touch is followed by something out of the Elizabethan era. (There are numerous theatrical metaphors and references to Shakespeare's plays, as though Brathwaite really wanted to write something along the lines of *A Comedy of Errors*.) Like the poor cat i' the adage, letting "I dare not" wait upon "I would," Brathwaite doesn't dare break with conventions, rename his protagonists Philip and Doris, and write a truly contemporary novel. Had he done so, *The Two Lancaster Lovers* would be a historically important novel, rather than a pleasant but compromised romantic comedy. It gets marks for its liberal attitude toward women's education and class snobbery, and for its patches of colloquial language, but loses points for timidity.

There's nothing timid about Welshman James Howell's (1594?–1666) audacious attempt to tell the recent history of England and Europe by way of talking trees. His *Dendrologia: Dodona's Grove, or The Vocal Forest* (1640) begins by evoking a time "not long since that trees did speak, and locally move, and meet one another," a time when the narrator "was but a little, little plant newly sprung up above ground" (1–2).[23] Making every arboreal pun imaginable, the sapling promises a political exposé that goes

"between the bark and the tree," leading the reader through the woods of his "rough-hewn, ill-timbered discourse" to a better understanding of recent political events (3). After a tour of the forest-kingdoms of Druina, Ampelona, Elayana, and Itelia (i.e., England, France, Spain, and the Low Countries), the narrator returns to Druina and begins his story of the conflicts between these forests, a thinly veiled diplomatic history of England during the early 17th century. The book was popular enough (four editions in the 1640s and a translation into French) that he published a second part in 1650 that continues the story up to the beginning of the English Civil War (1642–48). It concludes with a promise for a third part dealing with the war and the beheading of the oak-king of Druina ("His trunk from top was cleft asunder" [287]), but that never appeared.

Though *Dodona's Grove* is mentioned in passing in some literary histories, and though Henry Wotton's congratulatory poem-blurb compares it to Barclay's *Argenis*, it is probably better classified as political satire than as literature. Once the reader realizes Druina is England, that the olive tree is the king of Spain, that yews are clergyman, and so forth—pretty obvious from the start, and made explicit in the key printed in later editions—what's left is political commentary rather than imaginative literature, a cleverly told account of recent history rather than a fiction that functions independent of its coded references, as *Argenis* does (or, more aptly, as Holberg will do with his dendrologic characters in *Niels Klim*.) Howell himself regarded the work as allegorical history rather than fiction, for on the last page of part 1 the narrator fears the book will be mistaken for "some senseless, fantastic romance," which would be not "to have seen the wood for trees" (217), punning to the end. He reiterated the point a decade later in his prologue to the second part, where he disassociates his work from mainstream fiction, but in doing so offers a defense of the kind of unconventional, "difficult" fiction that *Dodona's Grove* closely resembles:

> Nor is this author the first, though the first in this peculiar maiden fancy, who deeming it a flat and vulgar task to compile a plain downright story (which consists merely of collections, and is as easy as walking of horses or gleaning of corn) hath under hieroglyphics, allegories, and emblems endeavored to diversify and enrich the matter, to embroider it up and down with apologues, essays, parables, and other flourishes; for we find

> this to be the ancientest and most ingenious way of delivering truth and transmitting it to posterity: . . . We find that the best commodities are kept in boxes and under locks, when the coarsest sort of wares lies prostitute upon the stall, and exposed to every common view and dirty fingers. (7–9)

The confusion over how to categorize *Dodona's Grove* is a perfect example of what critic Michael McKeon calls "the destabilization of generic categories" in 17th-century fiction, which also applies to Samuel Sheppard's *Amandus and Sophronia* (1650).[24] Subtitled "A Piece of Rare Contexture," this short novel offers a mulligan stew of genres: it combines Sidney's high romance with Greene's low stories of sex and violence, spices things up with a comically sordid tale *alla* Boccaccio, adds a few supernatural scenes, a masque, a pastoral interlude, and hints of political allegory concerning England's recent Civil War, winks at a misanthropic, all-male utopia (with homosexual overtones), and is garnished liberally with a number of poems in various genres. The prose likewise offers a party platter: Sheppard laces his narrative with flights of fancy, written with a quill "pluck'd even from Cupid's wing" (2.4), literary allusions and apostrophes, sardonic asides, and cameos from mythological figures. (As Amandus and his companion swim ashore after a shipwreck, "Neptune with all his Tritons gazed upon them, imagining another Melicerta, with Saron accompanied, had divided the dusky waves" [3.2].) The story itself is not particularly original: while noble Amandus is off repelling an invasion, his friend Rhoxenor, prince of Verona, tries to seduce his fiancée Sophronia; rebuffed, the prince tricks her into being caught naked in bed with a soldier and sends her to prison. Amandus returns, leads a rebellion after he learns what's happened, then escapes to Poland while Sophronia—after fighting off the king of Verona, who also lusts after her—escapes and becomes a shepherdess for a while. After the king's death, Amandus is called back to Verona to assume the throne, and eventually Sophronia returns and marries him. *Amandus and Sophronia* reads like the work of an erudite man trying to make a quick quid with a pulp novel, and amusing himself while doing so.[25] Whether by accident or design, it demonstrates the porousness of

generic boundaries in fiction at the time, and is a fast and compelling read, which can't be said of our next novel.

When young Roger Boyle (1621–79) was in France in the 1640s, he learned that the gigantic *roman héroïque* was all the rage among the *jeunesse dorée*, so even though he wasn't much of a reader before then, he became one after reading several of them. Boyle seems to have been especially taken with La Calprenède's *Cassandra*, for in 1651 he published the first volume of what would become a thousand-page imitation entitled *Parthenissa* (1651–69).[26] Set in the 1st century bce, it features two principal story arcs: one concerns two young princes named Artabanes (of Media) and Artavasdes (of Armenia), who separately arrive at an oracle in Syria for guidance on how to proceed with their messy lives. During the first two thirds of the novel, the oracle's priest, Callimachus, listens to their entwined, alternating stories: both are victims of political intrigue, and both are separated from the women they love—Artabanes from Parthenissa, Artavasdes from Altazeera—for the usual reasons of jealousy and suspicion. Then the priest (like them, born a prince) begins to tell his own story, which is even more blatantly based on *Cassandra*. (Just as La Calprenède's Oorondates falls for a foreign princess named Statira and winds up fighting against his own country's army, Callimachus falls for one, *also named Statira*, and does likewise.) But Boyle abandoned the novel before concluding Callimachus's story, or that of the two princes, apparently out of boredom. In a revealing preface that appeared in a 1655 edition of the first four parts (of six), Boyle regrets beginning the novel in the first place, "the idle fruit of some idle time": "And if I should continue the two remaining last tomes, it shall be as a penance for having writ the four first."[27] Part 5 appeared in 1656, but 14 years lapsed before Boyle could bring himself to publish part 6 (1669), at which point he abandoned the book and turned to other projects, including a short historical novel about Henry VIII entitled *English Adventures* (1676).

Parthenissa differs from its French models in two minor ways, structurally and thematically: it simplifies the overall narrative by limiting itself to a few story arcs and dispensing with the many, often irrelevant interpolated histories that bloat the genre, and then multiplies the complications of those few arcs. It also dispenses with the long discussions

of love that characterize French novels; Huet, describing those of La Calprenède and Scudéry in his *History of Romances*, said they "have love for their principal subject, and don't concern themselves in war or politics but by accident" (8). Boyle reverses the emphasis, placing it on war and politics, and treating love "but by accident." But these differences are not enough to save *Parthenissa* from the charges of unoriginality and tedium made even by its earliest readers. In February 1654, Dorothy Osborne, a brilliant young Englishwoman who was addicted to French romances, wrote to her boyfriend to say she had almost finished part 2 of *Parthenissa*, and allows it has "handsome language, you would know it to be writ by a person of good quality though you were not told it, but in the whole I am not very much taken with it, all the stories have too near a resemblance with those of other romances, there is nothing of new or *surprenant* [surprising] in them, the ladies are all so kind [ideal] they make no sport. . . ."[28] Osborne's right: to anyone who has read the earlier French novels, the novel is so derivative that it is difficult even to pay attention, much less to appreciate Boyle's accomplishments. Admittedly, his battle scenes and endless pages on military maneuvers and tactics have a louder ring of authenticity than similar scenes in French novels, largely due to his own battlefield experiences fighting under Cromwell during the Civil War, as does his grasp of the complicated political machinations that go on behind the scenes in any regime at war.[29] (After he abandoned the novel, Boyle wrote *A Treatise on the Art of War* [1677].) But these aren't enough to save *Parthenissa* from tedium; Boyle prides himself on its realistic complications—Artavasdes, undoubtedly speaking for the author, says of his story "the strange changes and intricacies it is replenished with [are] worthy your attention" (3.2, *sic*)—but after a while the eyes glaze over, lulled by Boyle's colorless, expository prose. In addition to borrowing the form of the *roman héroïque*, he uncritically retained their most ludicrous features: the protagonists' almost superhuman heroics, the incredibly coincidental meetings, the ability of Artabanes's servant to narrate great swatches of his master's story from his point of view, including letters he received, and so on. Although Boyle was quite familiar with Roman history —much of Artabanes's story takes place in Italy, where among other exploits he leads a slave revolt under the name Spartacus—he confesses in

his preface that he takes great liberties with chronology, such as allowing Hannibal to exist at the same time as Cleopatra, though they lived a century and a half apart. (He offers the lame excuse that historical fiction will inspire readers to seek out history books for the truth.) Like a soap opera, the endless complications seem to exist only to keep the story going endlessly; the last two parts in particular read like they were written on autopilot.

Only in two places do the eyes unglaze and pay closer attention: one is when Boyle narrates the colorful, elaborate ceremony of the oracle (4.2), which occasions some interesting discussions of the nature of interpretation. The priest tells Artabanes that he misinterprets the oracle, which parallels his misinterpretation of Parthenissa's actions earlier in the novel, underscoring the tendency of people to interpret phenomena subjectively rather than objectively. The other occurs in the dead center of the novel (3.3), where Artavasdes and a Roman general debate the merits of a kingdom versus a "Commonwealth," such as the one established by Cromwell in 1649. Boyle argues both sides well with numerous examples pro and con from ancient history, reflecting his own indecision: he opposed Charles I but was disappointed to see the Commonwealth turn into a dictatorship, and he later supported Charles II's return to the throne in 1660.

Sheppard and Boyle merely allude to the Civil War; several other authors took it as their principal theme, turning to the romance genre in order to express their dangerous political views under the guise of harmless fiction. The half-dozen surviving ones are all *romans à clef*, a popular genre at the time with sophisticated readers, who enjoyed unlocking literary works that relied on keys, ciphers, cryptograms, and other ploys.[30] Most of these political novelists were royalists, and hence had to resort to obfuscation to avoid censorship, or worse, from Cromwell's regime. Plus the genre allowed them to idealize their aristocratic heroes, to make a romantic adventure out of dirty politics.

Apparently written in 1645 though not published until a decade later, *Theophania* announces its strategy in the subtitle: "Several Modern Histories by Way of Romance, and Politically Discoursed Upon."[31] By "Romance" the author primarily means Sidney's *Arcadia*, and secondarily Barclay's *Argenis*. Like the former, it begins with the rescue of two

shipwrecked princes, physically resembling Sidney's Musidorus and Pyrocles, by a local lord of Sicily, the setting of the latter. Over the next four days we hear their backstory, along with that of Sicily, until recently "the envy of her neighbors and the wonder of the whole world," but now torn apart "by an intestine war" (93). Much of the novel consists of three lengthy recitations that dramatize key historical episodes contributing to the Civil, that is, "intestine war," which editor Pigeon spells out: "the marriage of Prince William of Orange and Princess Mary; the relationship between the earl of Essex and Elizabeth I and Essex's fall; and the history of the third earl of Essex, his involvement in the parliamentary cause, and the outbreak of the civil war" (37). Near the end, the princes' Sicilian host, Synesius (= Robert Sidney, nephew of Sir Philip and Mary Wroth's brother), analyzes the two theories for the cause of the war—the inevitable result of a flawed political system versus the avoidable result of "the inclinations or imbecility of some few princes, or the corruption of their ministers" (280)—and recommends negotiating with the rebel leader Corastus (= Cromwell). The novel ends abruptly shortly after that, with every indication that a concluding book was suppressed. For that reason, we never learn much about the eponymous Theophania, the idealized love of a visiting knight named Alexandro (= the future Charles II), though her name obviously suggests she represents religion, perhaps even the hope of restoring Catholicism as the state religion, for there's a strong Catholic bias running through the novel.

The political junkies of the time would have had no trouble identifying the real-life counterparts of the romance figures in *Theophania* and no doubt appreciated the author's politically astute take on recent events; but for the modern reader, it is merely a competent romance with a more than usual amount of political discourse. The structure and staging are handled well, the language is fitting, and per the conventions of the genre the male characters are all idealized heroes—though there are some homosexual undertones in the relationship between one of the shipwrecked princes and Alexandro, who alluringly resembles the prince's absent girlfriend[32]—and the few females are so idealized that "they make no sport," as Osborne would say. Perhaps the missing conclusion held some surprises, but as it

stands *Theophania* is a period piece that, like *Dodona's Grove*, is of more interest to students of British history than to students of the novel.

If *The Princess Cloria* (1653–61) is the greatest of these political romances—it is certainly the longest and most complex—that's because its Welsh author, Sir Percy Herbert (1610–67), was as much concerned with writing a great novel as he was a political allegory. Although he brilliantly dramatizes the political upheavals of England and Europe from about 1640 to 1660 with what commentators have praised as "considerable accuracy," "displaying a detailed knowledge of secret diplomacy" and offering "a remarkably astute analysis of the power politics of the major European states,"[33] Herbert did so by appropriating the oldest story in the book: the confrontation of young, inexperienced characters with the complicated world of adults, and how they mature to meet its challenges.

The first of the novel's two main narrative arcs traces the development of Princess Cloria (= Mary Stuart, daughter of England's Charles I), who grows from a sheltered, naïve child to a politically savvy young woman who recognizes she's a pawn in a geopolitical game and consequently tries to make her own moves, marrying the man of her dreams rather than submitting to a marriage of alliance. Her young husband, Narcissus (= William of Orange [United Dutch Provinces]) matures from an effeminate dandy to an effective soldier who regains his country's throne. The second arc shows how Cloria's older brother, Arethusius (= Charles II), grows up in a hurry after the execution of his father and realizes he must resort to cunning and consensus-building to reestablish the monarchy. Herbert tells the story of the Civil War and its aftermath under Cromwell in terms of how three privileged but untested teenagers confront the real world and learn to make the negotiations and compromises necessary to survive in that "labyrinth of difficulties."[34]

That makes *The Princess Cloria* sound simple, which it assuredly is not. The reader is thrown for a loop at the very beginning, which concerns a visit paid to King Euarchus of Lydia (= Charles I) by a character named Cassianus (= Charles Louis of the Palatinate [Bohemia]) seeking the king's help in restoring his usurped throne. (The pacifist king's reluctance to intervene for a fellow royal anticipates his own abandonment by the crowned heads of Europe when *he*'s overthrown; the author strongly urges

kings to support each other if they want to retain power.) Cassianus falls in love at first sight with Cloria, and since the first 50 pages deal with him—his longings for the princess, the romantic despair that sends him into the forest to take up the pastoral life, his decision to return to politics—the reader assumes the novel will be about his attempt to win Cloria's hand and his lost kingdom. Instead, he disappears during a shipwreck and is scarcely heard of again. Narcissus is introduced at that point, but in such foppish terms that the reader is surprised to learn he's the hero of the first half of the novel. Another surprise occurs a few pages later, when we and Cloria are shocked to learn that the shepherdess she recently befriended and cuddles is Narcissus in drag. We both learn that things aren't always what they seem, and thereafter we're on guard as new characters and situations appear.

Young Cloria (she's about 13 when the novel begins) is understandably nervous about sexual matters, which Herbert handles with no-nonsense worldliness, implying sexual naïveté is as dangerous as political naïveté for someone in her situation. After Cloria repulses Narcissus's physical advances, her governess Roxana—one of the most level-headed characters in the novel—tells her that love "requires as well a satisfaction of the body as the mind" (59). She's not advising premarital sex—Herbert follows this scene with the cautionary tale of a young woman who was caught in the act by her father, then ran away from home and wound up a ship captain's whore—but she argues that rigorous virtue is as out of place in the sexual sphere as it is in the political. The novel contains a few other frank and even racy scenes dealing with sex, highly unusual in the high-minded romances of the time, including a hilarious but significant seduction scene: Cloria catches the eye of Osiris, the prince of Egypt (= Spain), who surprises her one day alone in his art gallery trembling before a painting of the rape of Philomela. Hoping to reenact the painting, he villainously twirls the tips of his mustache (inventing that gesture long before it became a cliché) and slowly approaches her, compelling "her to make use of her dainty legs to avoid his importunity, like the flying Daphne from Apollo, which for some space afforded a delightful spectacle, if any had been there to have beheld it, seeing the grave prince with earnestness chase the fearful lady, though he thought it a derogation to his dignity to haste his steps much beyond the custom of his usual walk, for that it was the fashion of his country to seem moderate in every trivial affair" (69–70). Determined "not to be wrought

out of his pace," he keeps up his Mummy-like pursuit until Cloria, somehow, tires out; like a frightened little animal, she suffers him to take her ice-cold hand and murmur sweet nothings before he begins mauling her. For political reasons she has to play nice with him (as Roxana advised), so she *negotiates* with Osiris and turns "the feared tragedy to a perfect comedy" (70), putting him off with a wordy speech that is a masterpiece of diplomatic double-speak. After Osiris leaves, Cloria beats herself up for not telling him earlier that she was already in love with Narcissus, and for stringing the Egyptian along as Roxana adviced. Gathering "up the scattered remnants of her torn attire" (72), she tries to repair the torn attire of her conscience at the end of this brilliant scene, which crackles with tension and humor.

Cloria still has much to learn, handicapped by what Roxana harshly calls "a willful ignorance that no instruction can inform" (75). Later Cloria passes by an opportunity to marry Narcissus when he comes to Egypt because she insists on the formality of gaining her parents' permission first, an impractical delay that causes all sorts of future problems: later on Roxana blames the delay and the difficulties that resulted on what she calls Cloria's "superstitious modesty" (219; cf. 338 and 341). As the novel progresses, Cloria gains more confidence, "contrary to her nature" (138), and eventually can hold her own in political discussions; and while she never abandons her modesty, she modifies it from "superstitious" to politically advantageous. During the Civil War she learns to improvise as she tries to keep out of the hands of rebel forces and unsuitable suitors, at one point dressing as a boy to make an escape (which results in a comic scene where she has to share a bed with a boastful bumpkin). By the time she's married, and shortly after widowed, Cloria is as grown up as she needs to be to make her way in the world, at which point the narrative turns to her brother's progress in the labyrinth.

Arethusius follows a similar path of development: once he learns that he's being played by the king of Syria (France), he acknowledges "the malicious practices of the world" (286) and begins to resort to dissimulation and politicking to stay alive. For him, the galvanizing event is the execution of his father, which Herbert deliberately places in the dead center of the novel; after that, Arethusius has to negotiate with both the forces that want to crown him and those that want to capture him, leading to a series of battles

and adventures in Myssia (Scotland, where Charles II was made king in 1651) and in Europe. He's aware of the "cunning baits gilded over with deadly poison, the more easily to betray my youth and innocency" that various parties dangle before him (406), but he's sufficiency mature by now to avoid them. Arethusius's stumbling block is not "superstitious modesty" but religious doubts. Speaking for Catholic royalists like Herbert, he constantly questions how the gods could have allowed their own anointed to be executed, and wonders why they don't intervene to assert the "divine" right of kings. He begins to doubt his "Heresian" (Protestant) upbringing and is tempted to convert to the "Delphine" (Catholic) religion, shepherded by the arch-flamin of Delphos (Rome). Herbert doesn't conceal his religious bias, blaming England's current problems on its adoption a century earlier of the teachings of John Calvin (here called Herenzius), which not only led to republican agitation but also alienated England from Catholic superpowers like France and Spain (another reason why they didn't assist Charles I). *The Princess Cloria* is filled with religious discussions between various characters, and though the gods are dutifully thanked for restoring Arethusius to the throne at the end of the novel, *Cloria* dramatizes the despairing puzzlement that Catholic royalists felt after the beheading of Charles I in 1649, not unlike that of many Jews 300 years later who wondered how their god could have allowed the Holocaust. (The obvious explanation doesn't occur to them.) By the time Arethusius makes his triumphant return to Lydia, he is a practiced politician, wise to the malicious world, and won't be fooled again, by gods or men.

Like Thomas Hobbes, whose *Leviathan* appeared the same year the Commonwealth sold Herbert's estates (1651), inspiring him to take revenge on those Roundheads with this novel, Herbert insisted that an absolute monarchy and omnipotent church were necessary to avoid social chaos, "the world turned upside down,"[35] in which class distinctions disappear and each person pursues selfish desires without regard for others. Herbert enacts this on a formal level by constantly switching points of view, allowing a multiplicity of characters to voice their explanations of/reactions to events, jumping from one consciousness to another as the novel progresses. Like Arethusius's absent god, the author of course has a divine plan, but by shifting points-of-view instead of asserting authorial

omniscience he effectively dramatizes the egotism that goads every character, from king to commoner. Roxana explains this in religious terms —"the chief error of our impatience is that we take ourselves more framed for our own sakes than for His service" (66)—and in political terms, every character in *Cloria* puts his or her "private concernments" (215) above the public good. The novel is named after Princess Cloria because she alone sacrifices herself to the needs of her country; during Arethusius's triumphant return to Lydia, she is "as it were no more than a passive companion . . ." (606), above the partisan bickering that is still going on between career-minded politicians.

Although *The Princess Cloria* delves deeply enough into the causes and effects of the Civil War to qualify as a history textbook (albeit with a Catholic royalist bias), Herbert never forgot he was writing a novel. He chose that genre, he tells us in his historically important preface, "since by no other way could the multiplicity of strange actions of the times be expressed, that exceeded all belief and went beyond every example in the doing."[36] Obviously familiar with Sidney's *Arcadia*—*Cloria* concludes with a similar invitation to those with "a better pen and more leisure" to continue his characters' adventures (614)—along with Barclay's *Argenis* and French heroic romances, Herbert modifies their literary devices, discarding some conventions, like the long-winded recitations that "are sometimes continued for five or six hours together without intermission, which to my apprehension appears ridiculous" (preface, 213), and playing along with others. To add drama to his characters' travels, he's willing to adopt the convention whereby every sea voyage results in shipwreck or piracy, using it so regularly that, by the end of the novel, the blasé narrator simply says one character sailed to Greece "without any considerable adventure but what a rough sea and some persecution by pirates brought his particular" (584). But he builds on this trope to turn the danger of sailing into a metaphor for psychological states: his principal characters are often said to be in "a sea of confusion" (153, 181) and/or "a vast sea of amazement" (463). Before his execution, King Euarchus is imprisoned in a castle on a peninsula, where his enemies are personified as the menacing sea that surrounds him. The only calm sea voyage occurs at the end, when

Arethusius sails to Lydia to be crowned king, symbolically suggesting Lydia will have smooth sailing ahead.

Herbert employs more original, even striking imagery throughout the novel. While Cassianus is living the pastoral life—all the major characters do likewise at some point in an effort to escape from their troubles and responsibilities—he thinks back on Cloria "notwithstanding in such a dark way as lights are accustomed to appear in a thick mist, that could not ere long but be absolutely distinguished" (43). Cloria negotiates her favors with Osiris "like one that was constrained to deal with his creditor after he was arrested" (75). Herbert notes little things, like the lighting in a room, that previous novelists tended to ignore; during a nerve-wracking night, Cloria and Roxana "both cast themselves down upon their beds without taking the pains to pull off their clothes, not believing the rest they were probably to take could merit the labor" (80). The author obviously visualized his scenes, and rendered them with telling details that bring these scenes to life. *The Princess Cloria* also exhibits the interiority that was creeping into the more avant-garde novels of the period. Instead of stagy soliloquies, characters in Herbert's novel quietly think their way through various dilemmas. Cloria's postseduction analysis is conducted alone and in silence; only after she "reflect[s] upon her misfortunes" (72) does she pull herself together and tell Roxana what happened. At one point, the narrator says Arethusius "in a silent manner uttered, *or more properly thought these complaints to himself*" (465, my italics), signaling a shift from earlier representations of characters thinking to Herbert's "more proper" (more realistic) method, moving away from uttered soliloquy to interior monologue. During a surprise attack, even the inner thoughts of a panther are recorded (99)!

In addition to making his Hobbesian case for absolute monarchy, Herbert makes a case for the literary novel. His preface is a remarkable polemic in which he calls for new, higher standards in fiction. He claims he does away with "the tediousness of repartees and impertinent discourses commonly used in inventions of this kind," and reduces the number of characters "the better to avoid confusions, by reason of several repetitions of names which otherwise must have followed, whereby the reader might have been subject to have his memory put upon the rack to find out the meaning of the story" (211, 212). As noted earlier, he shortens (but doesn't eliminate) the lengthy recitations common to the heroic romance, frequently apologizing for the

longer ones in fact, but insists on their importance "for the better method and the righter understanding of his story," as the narrator says of one of them (531). But this streamlining doesn't mean the author is concerned with making things easier for the reader, or doesn't expect some effort on the reader's part. He says he was asked to supply a key to the novel, like those that were included in later printings of most political allegories, but Herbert refused because "the story is no way difficult to be understood by any who have been but indifferently versed in the affairs of Europe, and for others of the more vulgar sort, a bare romance of love and chivalry, such as this may be esteemed to be at the worst, will prove entertainment for their leisure," adding: "Besides, too much explanation of mysterious conceptions of this nature would have taken off something from the quaintness of the design" (212). This goes beyond the notion that any allegorical work can be read on two levels, literal and symbolic; it is one of the earliest acknowledgments that there are two audiences for novels: those who are "versed" in history and culture and can decode complex fiction, and "the more vulgar sort" (by which he simply means average readers) who are content to read at the surface level "for their leisure." Herbert didn't expect much from the latter, for he goes on to say: "I may make some doubt whether the harebrainedness of the present world will give leisure enough to most to dwell upon anything at all, much less to practice heroical virtues with such a constant settledness as is necessary, being the chief intention of the author (as I conceive) in writing of this romance, besides his affectionate duty to the royal family" (213–14).

Untroubled by the charges of elitism these statements might elicit, Herbert defends both the liberties he takes with history and the complexities he introduces into his novel:

> But here perhaps some may wonder why the perfect history might not have been as well undertaken for their honour, as to be thus mixed with several sorts of invention and fancies that rather lead people's thoughts into a dark labyrinth of uncertainties than instructs their knowledges how matters passed indeed. Unto which this answer must be returned: that as the intricate transactions of other places, happening not seldom at the same instant, being otherwhiles only conjectural (wherefore point of time is not always observed) though conducing for the most part to the main

> design, could hardly have been explained by a bare historical relation that gives no liberty for inward disputations or supposed passions to be discovered, so on the other side counsels, for the most part being given in private, much of the luster of the whole book would have been taken away tendering to the reader's satisfaction; and more especially seeing the common occurrences of the world do not arrive always at a pitch high enough for example, or to stir up the appetite of the reader, which things feigned may do under the notion of a romance, being it hath liberty to tell as well what might have been as what was performed in reality. And this certainly made most of the ancient and brave poets clothe their writings in figures and suppositions . . . (214).

The implications of these remarks are profound, especially for the debate nowadays over the validity of "difficult" fiction. As Annabel Patterson points out,

> What we witness here is the birth of the most characteristically "modern" idea of fiction, that it ought to be artfully difficult, a concept whose ultimate product will be *Finnegans Wake*, with its own scholarly industry and keys published, though not by its author. And what is simultaneously registered here is the demotion, into a second, inferior category, of what had previously been the primary idea of fiction, the light and popular romances that had supposedly diverted medieval and Renaissance readers. . . . The "vulgar sort," who cannot penetrate to the deep structure of the narrative, will be, like Cromwell's censors, excluded from the interpretive community.[37] The historical romance equates seriousness with intellectual elitism, popularity with misreading; entertainment is the "worst" function the text is capable of. (197–98)

At a time when novels were still considered mere entertainment, Herbert argues (and then demonstrates) they could be art, and that art requires a different breed of reader. On the penultimate page of his "artfully difficult" novel, Herbert writes, "This now shall finish our romance, that perhaps hath too long a season troubled the reader's patience; but as fancies are creations of our own, and therefore for the most part please with some excess, so of the other side I neither invite or compel any to the exercise" (613). Take it

or leave it: this Cavalier author is not going to condescend to readers, but will follow his fancy, indulge in excess, and create a work of art that will be fully appreciated only by those willing to work at art. He metafictionally boasts how he supplants history with "fancies" throughout the novel, from mosaics "composed for the most part of natural stones, and wherein true representation any place wanted [was lacking], the defects became supplied with exquisite painting of most of the best hands of Asia" (19–20), to "a new curiosity" in the Egyptian desert, a structure "wrought with such exquisite skill" that "To describe all the particulars of this stately fabric[ation] were to enter into discourses of extraordinary protractions, since as the whole was composed of multitudes distinguished, so every division appeared a kind of miracle either of art or nature," testifying to "the extraordinary pious intention of him who raised this stupendous work" (575). I wrote earlier that *Cloria* is largely about inexperienced youngsters learning to cope with the complexities of the world; analogously, the inexperienced but game reader who sticks it out to the end learns how to cope with complex fiction. In truth, *The Princess Cloria* isn't particularly difficult: overly long and verbose perhaps, but worth the effort because it is easily the best English novel since Wroth's *Urania*, and arguably the best English novel of the 17th century. Shout it out: *C-L-O-R-I-A*![38]

Herbert's achievement is all the greater when compared to the two other major Civil War novels written at this time. Richard Brathwaite, the prolific author of *The Two Lancashire Lovers*, wrote a political allegory entitled *Panthalia* (1659) that takes a more sardonic view. Closer to a Menippean satire in heterogeneous form, it purports to be a historical treatise by one Castalion Pomerano on the troubles in Candy, complete with learned marginal notes, many in Latin. Posing as an annalist who has "historically compiled and methodically digested" (24) a variety of materials relating to the Candiot civil war, the author includes many letters and formal speeches in his pseudodocumentary, some of them historically accurate. Then he interrupts his account halfway through with "The Pleasant Passages of Panthalia, the Pretty Peddler," the novella-length story of a woman privately engaged to a "free-bred spark" who bails on his debts (financial and matrimonial) and runs off to a garrison; running after him dressed as a man, Panthalia attracts a girl named Aretina for the usual faux homoerotic

shenanigans before she gets her man—all of which functions as an allegory of the country's political problems. After this comic-romantic interlude, the author returns to his history, now providing medieval-sounding section titles. Written while Cromwell's son Richard was in power—in the "Advertisement" the author implies it was denied a license for publication—the novel ends with a hasty epilogue celebrating the crowning of "Charicles" (Charles II).

The formal diversity of the materials gives some interest to an otherwise disappointing novel. Since the tissue-thin allegory could be penetrated by any reader of the time, Brathwaite skimps on plot and character development. A rich royalist, his explanations for the Civil War are suspect: on the one hand, he has Panthalia blame the spoiled people of Candy, who didn't appreciate their peaceful, prosperous lives under a monarchy and rioted for change; on the other hand, he suggests it was England's "effeminacy" that led to the uprising. He begins his story with a stand-in for Elizabeth I, "a lady of a masculine spirit" (1), tells of politicians dominated by wives of a similar "virile and masculine valor" (24), and even reports how the coach of "an eminent peer of Candy" was hijacked by a ghostly woman who put him in his place: "for his heels were presently stuck up and hoisted to the inner top of the chariot, with his head groveling below" (249). On the following page we're told of the prodigious birth of a girl "having two heads, two [pair of] breasts, and four arms" (250). Effeminacy, sexual role reversals, and female monsters were the least of England's problems before the Civil War, and Brathwaite dramatizes enough machinations by ambitious courtiers and politicians to demonstrate he knows better. Admitting upfront that his account will "saucily detract" from the way Cromwell's censors view things, Brathwaite's combination of serious political allegory and saucy social satire is itself a kind of two-head prodigy. At best, it can be called "a promising experiment."[39]

The same might be said for a more impressive effort, *Aretina; or, The Serious Romance* (1660) by Sir George Mackenzie (1638?–91), who, after this youthful fling, became one of the most powerful jurists in Scotland, earning the nickname "Bloody Mackenzie" for his ruthless application of the law. Like *Panthalia*, *Aretina* is a hybrid: books 1, 2, and 4 form a Sidnean romance about two traveling aristocrats, passionate Philarites and

rational Megistus, undergoing typical romantic adventures. Book 3 is a coded account of the Civil War in Scotland, straightforward and historically accurate compared to the more fanciful romance section. The two stories are thematically united by the author's concern for passion versus reason: in love as in politics, too much passion or too much reason is dangerous; a judicious balance of the two is adviced, else individuals and nations will wind up like the character in the very first sentence of the novel: "Melancholy having lodged itself in the generous breast of Monanthropus (lately chancellor of Egypt) did, by the chain of its charms, so fetter the feet of his *reason* that nothing pleased him now but that whereby he might please that *passion*, frequenting more woods than men, deeming them the only fit grove to sacrifice in the choicest of his *thoughts* to the worst of *passions*" (1; my italics). In his case, passion overwhelms reason and leaves him, literally and metaphorically, lost in the woods. At the other extreme, an inhuman devotion to reason can leave one failing to see the forest for the trees, as in the comic example of a mathematician's account of a battle:

> Sir, we marched from this city, as from the point *A.* (demonstrating all upon a paper) by a direct line to the citadel of Iris, as the point *B.*, whence by a spiral line we marched to the caves of *C.*, where we eclipsed ourselves all night; the next morning, before the Sun came from the Antipodes to our horizon, we marched, keeping the figure of a parallelogram, conducted by Megistus, Philarites, and the martial knight, who, as three lines, made a glorious triangle, whereof Megistus, as general, was the hypotenuse; in this figure we marched to the shore, where we encountered the Persians, upon whose bodies we carved hundreds of wounds in form of isosceles, scalenum, and trapezoids. (107–8)

Monanthropus's daughter Aretina—meaning "virtuous one," and no relation to the hoodwinked girl in Brathwaite's novel—represents an ideal balance of reason and passion, and gradually teaches passionate Philarites that love should *follow* reason, not precede it in a love-at-first-sight attraction. "If ye be really distempered with that passion," she tells him, "employ your reason" (74). She even makes him read some essays. Similarly, subjects should come to love their king *after* they've understood and acknowledged

the reasons for his absolute authority over them. “Reason first, complimented by love, makes the ideal man, the ideal marriage, and the ideal monarchical set-up,” writes Irene Beesemyer in a canny essay on *Aretina* (57).

As the quotations above indicate, *Aretina* is linguistically rich, filled with “thunderbolts of wit” (214), as though Mackenzie, like his character Megistus, had “come there to make parade of his eloquence” (52). As the twin plots progress, the author inserts rhetorical showpieces, bawdy stories, parables, poems, masques, essays on political theory, all the while parading his recherché vocabulary: “postliminius,” “homologate,” “cacochimick,” and his go-to word “nimious,” which appropriately means “excessive, overmuch,” for this is a nimious novel about nimious characters. Mackenzie is a master of the extended metaphor, as in the opening sentence of part 4, which cleverly segues from the political rebellions of part 3 back to the Sidnean love stories, from the winter of tragedy to the summer of romance: “The hard-hearted ice had now dissolved itself in tears through rage to see itself conquered by its enemy the Sun, who advancing to his former height from which that rebel Winter had degraded him, was sending forth his beams in troops to subdue Winter’s auxiliaries; and in that sweet month of May, wherein the earth, as a badge of her gratefulness to the Summer, begins to put on its livery and when the air lays aside that veil of thick mist wherein it lapped itself during the coldness of Winter” (343).

Mackenzie’s *Aretina* is significant not only because it appears to be the first Scots novel, but more importantly because it is preceded by a preface that constitutes one of the first attempts to theorize the novel in English literature. Like the lawyer he was soon to become, the audacious 22-year-old defends his client the novel, argues for its virtuous character, and counsels other novelists how they should write in the future. During the discovery process he uncovered “thousands” of predecessors stretching back to Heliodorus, and in arguments that anticipate Barth’s “literature of exhaustion” and Bloom’s “anxiety of influence,” Mackenzie advices novelists to study precedents in order to distinguish themselves from their predecessors. Like Herbert, he also makes a case for “difficult” novels, entering into evidence the testimony of naturalists who observe those “kernels are best where the shells are hardest.” Recognizing that the novel (like the United Kingdom itself) was at a crossroads, he knew it was time to

shed the “things impracticable” and “soaring pitch” of chivalric romances, to steer the genre away from passionate romance to more reasonable realism. He examines the four styles novelists tend to use:

> There are some who embroider their discourse with Latin and Greek terms, thinking, like those who are charmers, that the charm loses its energy if the words be not used in Latin. But this is as ridiculous as if one who desires to make his face seem pleasant should enamel it with red, blue, green, and other colors, which though they are in themselves pleasant, yet are ridiculous when placed there. And this is a university style, which savors too much of its pedant, and is at best but bastard oratory, seeing the scope of all orators is to persuade, and there can be no persuasion where the term is not understood. Examples of this are Browne, Charleton, etc.[40] The second style is that of moral philosophers, where the periods [sentences] are short and the sense strong, and our experience teaches us that the shorter anything be, it is the stronger. This style suits best with preachers, whose it is to debit the grand mysteries of faith and religion, for seeing sentences there should be weighty, if they were either many or long, they would burden too much the hearers. The third style is that of barristers, which is flourished with similes, and where are used long-winded periods; and of all others, this is the most preferable, for seeing similitude is but a harmony, this style shows that excellent harmony and rapport which God intended in the first creation, and which the philosophers of all ages have ever since admired. This lawyers have learned from the paucity of all human laws, which makes them oft recur to that topic which teaches them to argument from the parity of reason. And in this they resemble mechanics, who by applying a cord whose length they know to any body whose length they ignore [don’t know] do thereby learn its measures also. And by this way Nathan in the Old Testament, and our savior in the New, reprimands the errors of David and the self-conceited Jews. The fourth style is where the cadence is sweet and the epithets well-adapted, without any other varnish whatsoever, and this is that style which is used at Court and is patterned to us by eloquent Scudéry. (9–10)

Not surprisingly, he prefers the style of barristers, for they are used to dealing with metaphoric analogies, as Mackenzie demonstrates in his own novel with analogies between personal and political relationships. (Nevertheless, his writing has elements of all four styles, adding to the incongruous nature of the text.) Finally, he recognizes that the best novelists are not imitators but creators: if his god is the author of "the first creation," then novelists are the gods of subsequent and analogous creations.

Mackenzie's own creation is a king-size haggis with perhaps too many ingredients, and as he admits, it's only a swatch of what he intended. But *Aretina* offers a unique Scottish perspective on the Civil War, makes a lawyerly case for monarchy (which we the jury are free to reject, since it is based on the legal fiction of the "divine" right of kings), and charts a course for a genre that should be taken more seriously.

A satirical epilogue to the Civil War-novel genre, *Don Juan Lamberto; or, The Comical History of Our Late Times* (1661) chronicles in faux-medieval fashion (black-letter font and all) the ousting of Cromwell's son Richard by a cabal of republicans led by John Lambert. Clearly a royalist, the author —"Montelion, Knight of the Oracle," now thought to be poet and painter Thomas Flatman (1637–88)[41]—mocks the squabble for power after Oliver Cromwell's death, portraying army leader John Desborough (also satirized in Butler's *Hudibras*) as "the giant Desborough" chasing after "Ricardus, surnamed for his great valor the Meek knight," with a club, and so on. There are a few cheap laughs, as when a conspirator's oafish son, yclept "the overgrown Childe," is dumbstruck at the sight of his future wife: "While he stood in this posture, his backside being ashamed that his mouth should be so silent, opened itself and with one single monosyllable did so alarm the company" (1.10). The author delights in exposing "the Seer Warriston" (a Scottish judge and statesman) trading sex for political favors with a prostitute and other scandalous in-jokes, probably funny at the time. Supernatural events enliven the second part of the short novel, which the gloating author concludes by enclosing his enemies in an iron tomb, "enchanted by magical art, . . . where we shall leave them conversing with Furies, walking spirits, and black pots of ale . . ." (2.13).

If Roxane Murph's book-length bibliography of the English Civil War genre is to be believed—and it probably shouldn't be, for she omits all the

novels I've discussed, apparently because of their allegorical settings—there were no further *literary* novels about the conflict and its aftermath, only mainstream historical sagas, with the possible exceptions of Daniel Defoe's *Memoirs of a Cavalier* (1720), Sir Walter Scott's *Woodstock* (1826) and Adam Thorpe's transhistorical *Ulverton* (1992).

Let's get off the king's highway and backtrack through some curious side streets of fiction. A possible challenger to *Aretina*'s place as the first Scottish novel appeared in 1652 with the ungainly title *Exskybalaurum; or, The Discovery of a Most Exquisite Jewel*. It's certainly a fiction, if not a novel; its modern editors call it "a strange new mode blending panegyric and complaint, history and romance,"[42] and the purported author—who signs himself Christianus Presbyteromastix (A Christian Presbyterian-Eater)—refers to it as a "heterogenean miscellany" (171). It is actually the work of Sir Thomas Urquhart (1611–60), Rabelais' first and most creative English translator; a royalist, he had joined the army of Charles II just before it was defeated at Worcester in September 1651, when he was taken prisoner. He tried to talk the English authorities into releasing him in exchange for the jewel of the title, a universal language that would benefit the state. They balked, so at the beginning of 1652 he dashed off *The Jewel*, which feigns to be the work of an admirer who makes the case for Urquhart's release in a book-length fiction that at times looks and sounds like outtakes from *Gargantua and Pantagruel*.

Imitating Urquhart's hyperbolic, learned style of writing in homage, Presbyteromastix begins with a four-column genealogy (like those lists in Rabelais) that traces Sir Thomas back to Adam, and his mother back to Eve. Telling the fictitious story of how Urquhart's 3,000-page manuscript on the universal language was looted and scattered after the battle and how he recovered a few pages from the Worcester gutters, Presbyteromastix quotes from Urquhart's preface itemizing the features of a language that sounds sillier as it goes on. ("Three and twentiethly, every word in this language signifieth as well backward as forward; and however you invert the letters, still shall you fall upon significant words, whereby a wonderful facility is obtained in making of anagrams" [75]). He no doubt fails to reassure the

authorities of Urquhart's sanity by quoting his fantastic boast to have invented

> the trissotetrail trigonometry for facility of calculation by representatives of letters and syllables, the proving of the equipollency and opposition both of plain and modal enunciations by rules of geometry, the unfolding of the chiefest part of philosophy by a continuated geographical allegory; and above a hundred other several books on different subjects, the conceit of so much as one whereof never entered into the brains of any before myself (although many of them have been lost at Worcester fight) so am I confident that others after me may fall upon some strain of another kind, never before that dreamed upon by those of foregoing ages. (72).

Already the modern reader is reminded of the mad narrator of Swift's *Tale of a Tub* and of the Laputian projectors of *Gulliver's Travels*, even though Urquhart did indeed publish a book on language (*Logopandecteision*, 1652) and an unreadable one on trigonometry *(The Trissotetras*, 1645). After some biting remarks on the covetous Scotch Presbyterians, the narrator then argues that Urquhart's Scottish birth should not be held against him by his English captors and tells stories of some notable Scots, especially a young prodigy he calls the Admirable Crichton (pronounced CRY-tun). This novella-length tale is the most famous—OK, the only famous—facet of *The Jewel*, and though it's based on a historical character named James Crichton (1560–82), it is clearly, fabulously, an exaggerated account of the young scholar, fencer, and bon vivant. His feats are matched step by step by Urquhart's prodigious feats of language; ostensibly he was offering his language scheme to justify his release, but it's his language skills that make his case.

The author describes a five-hour, one-man performance Crichton once performed for an aristocratic audience in Mantua, which almost literally knocks 'em dead: one female spectator requires "an apothecary with restoratives as [another] did that of a surgeon with consolidative medicaments" (117). Marvel at this rushing, page-long sentence as Crichton leaves his audience amazed and hooks up with a groupie:

> During which time of their being thus in a maze, a proper young lady (if ever there was any in the world) whose dispersed spirits, by her wonderful delight in his accomplishments, were by the power of Cupid with the assistance of his mother, instantly gathered and replaced, did (upon his retiring) without taking notice of the intent of any other, rise up out of her box, issue forth at a postern door into some secret trances, from whence going down a few steps that brought her to a parlour, she went through a large hall, by the wicket of one end whereof, as she entered the street, she encountered with Crichton who was but even then come to the aforesaid coach which was hers; unto which sans ceremony (waving the frivolous windings of dilatory circumstances) they both stepped up together without any other in their company save a waiting gentlewoman that sat in the furthest side of the coach, a page that lifted up the boot thereof and walked by it, and one lackey that ran before with a kindled torch in his hand—all domestic servants of hers, as were the coachman and postilion who, driving apace and having but a half mile to go, did with all the expedition required set down my lady with her beloved mate at the great gate of her own palace; through the wicket whereof, because she would not stay till the whole were made wide open, they entered both; and injunction being given that forthwith, after the setting up of the coach and horses, the gate should be made fast and none (more than was already) permitted to come within her court that night, they jointly went along a private passage which led them to a lantern scalier whose each step was twelve foot long; thence mounting up a pair of stairs, they passed through and traversed above nine several rooms on a floor before they reached her bedchamber; which, in the interim of the progress of their transitory walk, was with such mutual cordialness so unanimously aimed at, that never did the passengers of a ship in a tedious voyage long for a favourable wind with greater uniformity of desire than the blessed hearts of that amorous and amiable couple were, without the meanest variety of a wish, in every jot united. (121–22)

It would be decades before another writer could match this for novelistic detail and Voltairic velocity. Urquhart follows this with the most scholastic sex scene since Colonna's *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili*:

> Thus for a while their eloquence was mute and all they spoke was but with the eye and hand, yet so persuasively by virtue of the intermutual unlimitedness of their visotactile sensation, that each part and portion of the persons of either was obvious to the sight and touch of the persons of both. The visuriency of either, by ushering the tacturiency of both, made the attrectation of both consequent to the inspection of either. Here was it that passion was active and action passive, they both being overcome by other and each the conqueror. To speak of her hirquitalliency at the elevation of the pole of his microcosm or of his luxuriousness to erect a gnomon on her horizontal dial will perhaps be held by some to be expressions full of obscoeness and offensive to the purity of chaste ears; yet seeing she was to be his wife and that she could not be such without consummation of marriage, which signifieth the same thing in effect, it may be thought, as *definitiones logicae verificantur in rebus*, if the exerced act be lawful, that the diction which suppones it can be of no great transgression, unless you would call it a solecism or that vice in grammar which imports the copulating of the masculine with the feminine gender. (124–25)[43]

In the final third of *The Jewel*, Presbyteromastix further defends Urquhart's nationality by telling of other Scottish soldiers, theologians, poets, and (building to his main argument) scholars like Sir Thomas. By this point, the admiring narrator has elevated Urquhart to an allegorical representation of his nation, just as Civil War novelists did with their eponymous heroines. In the closing pages, the author pours out the rest of his pot of inkhorn words to demonstrate the linguistic lengths he *could* have gone to in Urquhart's defense, and boasts that if he had so desired, he could have dressed his "quaint discourse" in "so spruce a garb that spirits blest with leisure and free from the urgency of serious employments would happily have bestowed as liberally some few hours thereon as on the perusal of a new-coined romancy or strange history of love adventures" (206–7). By using a rather ludicrous, word-mad narrator, by playing fast and loose with history, and by incorporating modes of fiction into his work, Urquhart created something that resembles an avant-garde novel, one that anticipates fictional oddities like *A Tale of a Tub*, *John Buncle*, *Tristram Shandy*, and

ultimately the lexiphanic novels of Frederick Rolfe, Alexander Theroux, and Mark Leyner. A few months after *The Jewel* was published, Urquhart was (coincidentally) released from jail, and the following year he gave the English-speaking public the first volume of his obstreperous translation of Rabelais.

Urquhart's female counterpart is the extravagant and erudite Margaret Cavendish, Duchess of Newcastle (1623–73), who in 1656 self-published one of the most remarkable books of fiction of the 17th century, "*sui generis* and as bizarre as it is unique."[44] *Nature's Pictures Drawn by Fancy's Pencil to the Life* begins with a cycle of verse narratives, followed by a couple dozen prose works "of huge variety and range," as her recent biographer says, "encompassing satires, comedies, tragedies, love stories, animal fables, dialogues, fairy stories, heroic romances, allegories—even autobiography. Some stories were very short, others the length of a short novella"[45]—and it is two of the latter that deserve special mention. *A Contract* is the intriguingly odd story of a scholarly young lady who speaks like a robot, dresses in black, and insists on marrying a profligate duke whose father contracted their marriage when she was six. As a child, Deletia studies history and moral philosophy but is forbidden "to read in romancies, nor such light books";[46] this work gives the impression Cavendish never read romances either, inventing the genre on her own. It has a fairytale quality, but is also daringly frank—Deletia's uncle warns her not to "marry some young, fantastical, prodigal fellow who will give you only diseases, and spend your estate, and his own too, amongst his whores, bawds, and sychophants" (23)—as though Cavendish was unacquainted with the literary decorum of her time. Events like masques are defamiliarized with scientific objectivity, and the whole thing reads as though Leibniz had programmed his primitive computer to write a novel.

Assaulted and Pursued Chastity is even stranger, a cautionary tale for young ladies about the dangers of rape. Sharing Deletia's dislike of romances, a proper young lady from the allegorical Kingdom of Riches is stranded in the Kingdom of Sensuality with no one to protect her from "rude entertainment from the masculine sex: as witness Jacob's daughter Dinah, which Shechem forced."[47] The resourceful teen, burdened with the

name Miseria, procures a pistol and shoots the first man who tries to rape her, a prince, which earns her his respect. Nonetheless, the prince imprisons her, and she prepares a suicide pill against his next assault but also, bizarrely, tells the prince she'd wed him if he were not not already married. Finding a page's suit, she cuts her hair and escapes in his clothes, hops a ship, changes her name to Travellia, and winds up in an exotic land inhabited by purple people with white hair and weird, hybrid animals, vying with Cyrano's *Other World* (which Cavendish *later* read) for hallucinatory strangeness. Pretending to be a messenger from the gods, "he" (as the protagonist is now pronoun'd) shoots dead a high priest, again earning male respect the hard way, and "civilizes" the natives before shipping out for home, only to be captured by pirates who happen to be captained by the prince (long story). She escapes again, he pursues her again, and both get caught up in a war between the Queen of Amity and the King of Amour. (The names of these countries remind us that Scudéry's *Clelia* and its *Carte de Tendre* appeared about then.) Still in male drag, Travellia leads the queen's army to victory over that of the king and his new favorite (you guessed it), the stalking prince, who challenges the young general to a duel and wounds Travellia in a symbolic rape. Belatedly recognizing him/her, the prince nurses Travellia back to health, by which time he learns his old wife has died, clearing the way for their marriage in one of the most imaginative treatments of the battle between the sexes ever written. If *A Contract* anticipates the odd novels of Ivy Compton-Burnett, *Assaulted and Pursued Chastity* evokes Angela Carter.[48]

Cavendish is best known for *The Description of a New World, Called the Blazing World*, published a decade later as an appendix to her *Observations upon Experimental Philosophy* (1666). It's a rather slapdash, self-indulgent utopian novel, more a daydreaming fantasia than an effective work of fiction. A nameless lady is abducted by an admirer and taken on a ship to the Arctic—most utopian adventure novels earlier in the century went south, but the ever-contrary Cavendish heads north—and after her abductors die she finds herself in a parallel world at the North Pole ablaze with starlight and inhabited by a variety of manimals: bear-men, fox-men, bird-men, spider-men, ape-men, lice-men, and so on, along with some satyrs and giants. The emperor of the Blazing World takes one look at her

and makes her his empress, then disappears for most of the narrative as she forms scientific societies and instructs her hybrid subjects to gather scientific data and report back to her. The first half of the short novel consists mostly of their reports, which quickly grow tedious, followed by observations upon the metaphysical world furnished by some spirits she summons up. A "gallimaufry of reason and faith,"[49] it reflects the protagonist's (and Cavendish's) keen interest in science but also her unscientific devotion to Christianity—to which she converts the Blazers via some flashy, Wizard of Ozzy special effects representing hellfire—and her obsession with the Kabbalah.

The novel takes an interesting, metafictional turn about halfway through when the spirits convince the empress to summon the soul of Margaret Cavendish to coauthor "a poetical or romancial Cabbala, wherein you can use metaphors, allegories, similitudes, etc. and interpret them as you please" (183). Praising the act of literary creation, they assure her that "every human creature can create an immaterial world fully inhabited by immaterial creatures"—Cavendish called her manuscripts "paper bodies"—"And since it is in your power to create such a world, what need you to venture life, reputation and tranquility to conquer a gross material world?" (185–86). This is followed by a rather silly digression as the two souls of these "Platonic lovers" merge and tour the material world, patriotically singling out England and its king for special praise and discussing the financial problems of Cavendish's husband. The narrative gets back on track for the final section, a cartoonish sci-fi attack involving submarines led by the empress and her creatures on countries threatening England, after which the empress and her soul-mate daydream their lives away in the paradisaical Blazing World. Although the novel is a testament to Cavendish's intellectual range and imagination, it's a little too fancy-free, and for modern readers a little too reactionary, politically and scientifically: the empress distrusts telescopes, for example, and near the end renounces her scientific societies on Cavendish's advice, "for 'tis better to be without their intelligences than to have an unquiet and disorderly government" (202). The novellas in her 1656 collection anticipate 20th-century writers, but *The Blazing World* is stuck in the 17th century.

Also published in 1656, *Don Zara del Fogo: A Mock Romance* claims to be "written originally in the British tongue, and made English" by one Basilius Musophilus, the pedantic persona of the otherwise unknown Samuel Holland. It's a short parody of chivalric romances, which were still popular and often reprinted in the 1650s, and is amusing in a predictable way. Holland hits all the usual targets with bombastic prose, deliberately awful poetry, and ludicrous names. (Don Zara's sword is called Slay-a-Cow, and his opponents in a climactic tournament bear Monty Pythonesque names like the Knight of the Pudding and the Knight of the Toasted Cheese.) Even without the reference to *Don Quixote* near the end, it's obvious that the author wanted, as the title page of the 1660 reprint states, to cure readers of romances, for here "the prodigious vanities of a great part of them are (as in a mirror) most lively represented, and so naturally personated, that the ingenious reader, observing their deformities, may delightfully be instructed and invited to the pursuing of more honourable and profitable studies."[50]

Don Zara del Fogo is indeed "most lively," and most inventive. Holland gives his knight-errant a squire named Soto, but makes him wiser than his illiterate master, and undercuts their exploits with several doses of reality. Lodging in a peasant's cottage en route to his first adventure, the knight is devoured by bedbugs at night and the next morning wonders how he is going to pay the bill the peasant unexpectedly sticks him with. He gets seasick during an ocean voyage, and though Don Zara speaks magniloquently most of the time, but doesn't hesitate to tell Lamia, "I was once so bewitched that I could not shit till two or three candles' ends were thrust up —" (2.1). And there's an element of sexual realism that is not only at odds with chivalric romances but daring for any novel of the time. Don Zara's first encounter with a beautiful woman, whose blouse was "not so closed but that those hills of snow, her immaculate breasts, were visible" (1.5), does not go well: when he follows her to her palace, she dumps a bucket of her urine on him from the balcony. He has better luck with a witch named Lamia: she sizes him up with "good hope of his strenuous activity when Venus should make proof of his procreative part" (2.1), and the couple does get strenuously procreative later with a frankness rare in 17th-century fiction. After they have sex, Lamia takes Don Zara on a tour of

hell—there may be a metaphor in that—by way of an infernal spell that the author warns readers not to utter aloud; after visiting the gloomy Christina hell and meeting Satan himself, our hero glimpses the pagan Elysian Fields,

> Where are no locusts, nor six-footed lice,
> But popinjays and birds of paradise,
> Plump young youths with buxom maids do what they please,
> And never fear the fatal French disease. (2.4)

For gay readers, there is the vision of "a troop of beauteous young men, all naked with vast-sized genitals,[51] sitting at a table furnished with all sorts of delicates, and after their repast dancing most gracefully to the tune of Dido" (2.4).

As in *Don Quixote*, the narrator claims to be dealing with an older manuscript, and he fills the margins with pedantic notes: when Don Zara mentions astrological houses, the commentator adds: "Being twelve in all. See Merlinus Angelicus, *De Starribus & ejus mansionibus* tract. 100, p. 10,000" (1.2). In several marginalia, the commentator appeals to traditional authorities to justify unbelievable actions, and it's here that the erudite Holland shows his claws. Like Cervantes, he often slips in the acts of biblical heroes and saints in his accounts of chivalric feats, sacrilegiously consigning the Bible and hagiography to the same level as silly romances. He isn't much more respectful toward literary tradition: the commentator dismisses Homer and Virgil as "forgers," and glosses a reference to Seneca thus: "That very Lucius Anneus Seneca who wrote of temperance and fortitude, yet lived like an effeminate epicure, and died like a pusillanimous coward" (1.1). This "Romance-Eater" (Romancio-Mastrix) wants not only to wean readers away from traditional romances but also from questionable traditions and "articles of faith" in theology, literature, and philosophy.

Writing with Rabelaisian gusto and Cervantine subversion, Samuel Holland produced a minor masterpiece. At the end of the novel, after Don Zara and Soto come across a giant winged hog, mount him for an aerial tour of the world, and crash-land in Libya among dog-headed people, the author leaves them there and invites (à la Sidney) someone else to continue Don

Zara's exploits. No champion came forth to accept the challenge, for *Don Zara del Fogo* is a tough act to follow.

In 1659, after 15 years' work, William Chamberlayne (1619–79) published *Pheronnida*, which, as I noted earlier (p. 37), one critic called the first English novel in verse. The subject matter is indeed similar to that in ancient Greek novels, specifically Heliodorus' *Ethiopian Story*, and Chamberlayne's excessive use of enjambment provides a narrative flow lacking in predominantly end-stopped verse. However, the fact that he subtitled it *A Heroick Poem*, and later rewrote it as *Eromena: A Novel*, suggests he intended the earlier work to continue the tradition of narrative poems like *Orlando furioso* and William Davenant's *Gondibert* (1651) rather than to introduce a new genre. The posthumously published *Eromena* (1683) reduces the 300-page poem to a slim novella, and is dismissed as "worthless" by George Saintsbury, a champion of *Pheronnida*, so I'll take his word for it and move on down the mean streets of crime fiction.

This ain't great literature, so we won't linger long, but the crime novels that sprouted up in the 1660s form an important link between older Spanish picaresques and later realistic novels like *Moll Flanders*, increase the number of roles women could play in fiction, and goose literary diction with racy vernacular. For example, the anonymous *Life and Death of Mrs Mary Frith* (1662)—like the others in this genre, based on a real person (1584–1659) but tarted up with fictional elements—celebrates the criminal exploits of a transvestite woman, "alias Moll Cutpurse," in goofily exuberant prose. The opening address "To the Reader" could have been written by Urquhart, offering "an account of this Sybilla Tiburnia, the Oracle of Falsity," and warning "he that looks not upon Moll Cutpurse with the same admiration, and thinks not her nymphship as venerable as any of that mysterious sisterhood, is not fit to carry guts to a bear, nor officiate in the rites of those games consecrated to this Bona Roba and goodly matron"—that is, to this prostitute and bawd.[52] Formally enacting Frith's rejection of patriarchal expectations—she refuses to act like a girl when growing up and escapes from her family's attempt to ship her to America—the novella begins with an account of her childhood by a male narrator who regards her as an intriguing freak, but after 10 pages Frith takes control of the narrative and tells her own story. This section purports to be a memoir

she wrote at the end of her life, after perusing "tale-books and romances, and the histories of the Seven Champions, and the like fopperies" (70)[53] and concluding she could novelize her life in a similar fashion. Just as Dekker and Middleton did in their 1611 play *The Roaring Girl*, the author ignores the seedier aspects of the historical Mary Frith's life (especially the whoring and pimping) and focuses instead on her daring independence and business accomplishments as a fense for stolen goods. (Though not a prostitute herself, Frith acknowledges "that among my large acquaintance I had some familiarity with the mad girls and the venerable matrons of the kind motion" [51]—a euphemism of Japanese delicacy.) If the reader suspects the whole thing is a con like those she pulls on her victims—and in fact this section too was probably written by a man practicing literary transvestism—it remains an entertaining tale filled with garish local color, literary allusions (*Guzman of Alfarache*, *Don Quixote*), political observations (like most criminals, she's a conservative, and discusses the disastrous effects of the Civil War on her illicit trade), as well as (im)pertinent challenges to the patriarchal status quo, in fiction as well as in life.

The less interesting *Case of Madam Mary Carleton* (1663) is a more blatant con job, ostensibly the autobiography of a German princess but actually a concoction by a ghostwriter defending a crafty Englishwoman who impersonated not a man but an aristocrat, a far worse transgression in class-conscious England. It imitates in style and content the French memoir-novels then coming into vogue, and in fact when younger the narrator admits she occasionally set aside history books to indulge in the "facile pastimes of literature: romances and other heroical adblandiments, which being written for the most and best part in French."[54] A few pages later, she boasts, "I might as well have given luster to a romance as any of those supposed heroines" (91), and if we didn't know from the historical record that Mrs. Carleton—aka "Henrietta Maria de Vulva," as the pamphleteers dubbed her—was merely a scheming gold-digger, one could add her to those bookish dreamers who try to live their lives as though they they were in a novel. To confuse fact and fiction, the author includes transcripts from Carleton's recent trial for bigamy (in which she was acquitted, to the delight of the public), and this "supposed heroine" puts on

a convincing act as an unfairly libeled woman, enough to gull some readers of the time into mistaking this contrived fiction for nonfiction, and for others a half-century later to still remember her: realizing the need to conceal her name, the heroine of Defoe's *Roxana* (1724) says, "I might as well have been the German Princess" (271).

Mary Carleton continued to rob and cheat for another decade until she was caught and hanged in 1673; that year, an author/publisher named Francis Kirkman (1632–80?) rushed into print a more interesting novel about her entitled *The Counterfeit Lady Revealed*. Announcing that he is going to expose the real details of Carleton's life, Kirkman—who had met her a few times—gives a fairly accurate account of her upbringing, her love of romance novels, and her first marriage. But after a dozen pages, he decides *The Case of Mary Carleton* is reliable after all and quotes almost verbatim from it for the next 15 pages.[55] Fully aware Carleton was an inveterate liar, he buys into her fiction with the same gullibility with which he read chivalric romances as a kid (see below, p. 595), and unwittingly converts his book from nonfiction into fiction. He proceeds to quote (without acknowledgment) several lengthy passages from an anonymous verse lampoon entitled *Vercingetorixa; or, The German Princess Reduced to an English Habit* (1663), which are rudely entertaining but hardly bolster his claim to have written "the best and truest account" of Carleton (9). He passes along unsubstantiated rumors, quotes from a play about her (which he confesses he hadn't seen), and recounts her love affairs, though pulling himself up short "that I may not seem to romance by telling you all their private discourses" (54). Yet he goes on "to romance" by dramatizing dialogue-filled stories of her later crimes. I'd like to think *The Counterfeit Lady* is an artful experiment in mixed media and the nature of truth, but, knowing Kirkman, it is more likely an artless mélange he threw together to cash in on Carleton's death. We'll meet him again in the back alleys of publishing, but first let's cross-examine a 1665 book Kirkman bought rights (and wrote unauthorized sequels) to, the longest and most vicious of these Restoration crime novels.

The English Rogue appeared in an unlicensed edition in 1665, too "smutty" (as a later commentator said) to be sold over the counter until a more "refined" edition was licensed in 1667.[56] The anonymous author was

a ne'er-do-well bookseller-turned-hack named Richard Head (1637?–86?), who wrote it to make money, drawing upon his own upbringing for the first few chapters and padding out the rest with material pilfered from other books. It purports to be the autobiographical confession of a lowlife named Meriton Latroon (cf. Spanish *ladrón*: thief), from juvenile delinquency up to about age 30. A born criminal, he runs away from home as a child, falls in with some Gypsies, then with some professional beggars, and as a punk teenager arrives in London (or Romeville, as the Gypsies call it) for a life of petty crime and debauchery—gambling, drinking, and whoring away his time until he flees to Ireland for further scams and scrapes, returns to England and joins a troop of highwaymen, and then a troop of crossdressing highway*women*, who wear him out with their sexual insatiability. He is eventually arrested and deported in September 1650 to America (at that time a dumping ground for criminals), is shipwrecked and rescued by a ship en route for the Canaries, and in the final 30 pages undergoes a novel's worth of adventures in Yemen and a fabulous Orient straight out of Mandeville's *Travels*.[57] He marries a waitress in Java, becomes a successful East Indian trader, and concludes his memoir hoping "that the reading of my life may be any ways instrumental for the reformation of licentious persons."[58]

Dick Head's seedy novel marks an important development in realism: it reeks of body odor and soiled clothes, and exposes the way the lower and criminal classes lived, giving middle-class readers some cheap thrills (loads of illicit sex here) and useful tips on how to avoid victimization. The artistry is questionable: hardly anyone is named ("Meriton Latroon" appears only on the title page), which reduces all the characters to stereotypes and depersonalized victims, including the narrator, for whom the author makes zero effort to elicit sympathy. The style is an incongruous mix of straight reporting, patches of purple prose and Latin quotations, and some poetry—probably less because the author conceived of his protagonist as a poet than because he figured the novel would be a good place to fense some of his own (and others') verses, much of it pornographic. It's possible there are some subtle critiques of religious hypocrisy (to curry favor, Latroon's mother switches religious denominations as often as criminals don disguises) and an implication that women angling for husbands use the

same fraudulent techniques that crooks do (literalized in the chapters on those highwaywomen). There are a few successful stabs at extended metaphors and black humor, but ultimately *The English Rogue* is, like earlier crime novels, something of a con job. In the original preface, Head admits "But some may say that this is but *actum agere*, a collection out of *Guzman*, *Buscon*, or some others that have writ on this subject," but protests, "I never *extracted* from them *one single drop of spirit*" (vii). In one sense this is true, for *The English Rogue* doesn't display the sincere concern with morality that complicates Alemán's novel (translated into English as *The Rogue*) and Quevedo's *Swindler*. But literary detectives have unearthed Head's borrowings from jestbooks, true-crime pamphlets, and other subliterary works, giving the lie to his claim, "I skimmed not off the cream of other men's wits, nor cropped the flowers in others' gardens to garnish my own plots; neither have I larded my lean fancy with the fat of others' ingenious labors" (vii–viii). Deny everything, criminals advise.

Francis Kirkman gained rights to the novel just after it was published in 1665 and urged Head to write a sequel; when he refused, Kirkman wrote and published a second part in 1668, admitting in his preface that his "first and chieftest" consideration "was to gain ready money." (He was also probably responsible for the extra material that extended the first edition's 50 chapters to 76.) Here some English visitors to the East Indies tell Latroon their disreputable stories, a rehash of his own rap sheet that is notable only for a few chapters (22–24) exposing the lowdown ways of booksellers/publishers (usually the same person back then), which support Lennard J. Davis's claim that in the 17th century "something about the literary trade was considered illicit, disreputable, and even criminal."[59] Parts 3 and 4 (1671), in which Head may or may not have collaborated with Kirkman, do little more than to sentence the reader of *The English Rogue* to nearly 1,000 pages of crimes and misdemeanors. Disgracefully, this was the first English novel to be translated into a foreign language.

Before leaving Kirkman and this genre, I want to praise him for achieving in another book what he failed to do in *The Counterfeit Lady Unveiled*, namely, an artful experiment in mixed media. *The Unlucky Citizen: Experimentally Described in the Various Misfortunes of an Unlucky Londoner . . . Intermixed with Several Choice Novels* (1673) is a publisher

autobiography that reads like a picaresque novel, in which interpolated "novels" (i.e., tales) eventually take over the book.[60] Even though he claims "I shall not (as it is usual in books of this nature, viz. *Gusman*, *Lazarillo de Tormes*, or our late *English Rogue*) give you any account of the miscarriages of my parents" (2), the book combines picaresque adventures with elements from Kirkman's beloved chivalric novels. His account of how he came upon those works is touching, and indicates that one doesn't need to be as mad as Don Quixote to fall under their spell:

> Thus was I bred till it was time to be an apprentice, and in all that time I do not remember that I was master of any money, only once I happened upon a sixpence, and having lately read that famous book of *The Friar and the Boy*, and being hugely pleased with that, as also the excellent *History of the Se ven Wise Masters of Rome*, and having heard great commendation of *Fortunatus*, I laid out all my money for that, and thought I had a great bargain, conceiting that the Lady Fortune would one time or other bestow such a purse upon me as she did on Fortunatus; now having read this book, and being desirous of reading more of that nature, one of my schoolfellows lent me *Doctor Faustus*, which also pleased me, especially when he traveled in the air, saw all the world, and did what he listed; but I was as much troubled when the Devil came to fetch him; and the consideration of that horrible end did so much terrify me that I often dreamed of it. The next book I met with was *Friar Bacon*, whose pleasant stories much delighted me. But when I came to knight errantry, and reading *Montelion, Knight of the Oracle*, and *Ornatus and Artesia*, and the famous *Parismus*, I was contented beyond measure, and (believing all I read to be true) wished my self squire to one of these Knights: I proceeded on to *Palmerin of England*, and *Amadis de Gaul*, and borrowing one book of one person, when I had read it my self, I lent it to another, who lent me one of their books; and thus robbing Peter to pay Paul, borrowing and lending from one to another, I in time had read most of these histories. All the time I had from school, as Thursdays in the afternoon, and Saturdays, I spent in reading these books; so that I being wholly affected to them, and reading how that *Amadis* and other knights not knowing their parents, did in time prove to be sons of kings

> and great personages, I had such a fond and idle opinion that I might in time prove to be some great person, or at leastwise be squire to some knight. (2)

In a sense, he becomes a squire to knights in brown leather when he begins reprinting their adventures, and throughout the book he alludes to these romances. At one point he says he's "as well pleased as if I had been dubbed a knight," and when he gets his own bookstore, he writes, "I had read in my romances of the pleasant life of hermits, how they lived without all trouble or care, and so did I and was as well pleased as might be I had the sole rule and command of my shop and books, and that I thought was equal to the government of any Enchanted Island" (12). Before reaching that blessed abode, the bookworm finds himself at an inn where he and others pass the time telling "novels" about other luckless people, alternating between fact and fiction: "you have my unlucky adventures mixed with those of others," he explains, but warns the reader not to be "better pleased with my idle wanton stories than with my sober advice to you" (7). But since his own story reads like a picaresque novel with chivalric overtones, and since he includes more stories as he goes on—the final chapter is one tale after another—the line between fact and fiction is blurred. I don't want to make too much of what is essentially a bumptious hard-luck story set in the early days of the book trade, appropriately stocked with bookish metaphors—he excuses the book's typos by saying it's the story of "the faults and erratas of his life"—but it's a telling example of an era when both the term "novel" and its properties were still up for grabs.

A Puritan example of the rogue novel can be found in *The Life and Death of Mr. Badman* (1680) by the fundamentalist preacher John Bunyan (1628–88). Of course Bunyan is better known for *The Pilgrim's Progress* (1678; part 2, 1684), a dream about a religious nut who, addled by Bible-study and fearful of an imminent apocalypse, abandons his wife and children, wanders through a Christian theme park/obstacle course, and emerges to the sound of ringing bells with the grand prize: a shiny gold suit. It's as simple as a Sunday School lesson, as literal-minded as a Jehovah's Witnesses comic book, and comes prooftexted with biblical citations and sampler homilies in the margins. This Christian hokum is redeemed only by occasional flashes of humor—reminiscent of the goofy religiosity of *The Simpsons*' Ned

Flanders—and its homespun style. That earthy vernacular has been praised by some critics as Bunyan's chief contribution to the novel genre—and for a few even qualifies *The Pilgrim's Progress* as the "first" English novel—but it's no different from the colloquial style that energizes the 17th-century English comic and criminal novels I've been discussing. The book is worth knowing because phrases and iconic sites like Vanity Fair and the Slough of Despond became part of the language, but I cannot sympathize with its most recent editor's lament "*The Pilgrim's Progress* has all but disappeared from both college classrooms and children's bookshelves."[61] Good riddance.

"*The Life and Death of Mr. Badman* has a far better claim than *The Pilgrim's Progress* to be treated as a precursor of the novel," its modern editors feel.[62] Two Puritan neighbors, Mr. Wiseman and Mr. Attentive, spend a day speaking of the recent death of Mr. Badman, who died horribly and, in the smug opinion of Mr. Wiseman, is on his way to hell. (Mr. *Badman*? Really? That's a three-year-old's name for a villain.) Knowing him since he was a child, Wiseman walks Attentive through Badman's profligate life (which closely resembles Meriton Latroon's), beginning with childhood lying and stealing, then hanging with a bad crowd, refusing to keep the Sabbath holy, swearing, all accompanied by copious religious commentary from Wiseman. Again like Head's antihero, Badman becomes an apprentice and goes from bad to worse; first by reading trashy books—he "would get all the bad and abominable books that he could, [such] as beastly romances, and books full of ribaldry, even such as immediately tended to set all fleshly lusts on fire" (40)—then by frequenting taverns and whores, seducing virgins, marrying for money and then running up debts, mistreating his wife, engaging in fraudulent business practices—the usual rap sheet, along with further sermons and supplementary examples from Wiseman, who gets rather coarse at times, as when taunting women who follow the latest fashions: "But what can be the end of those that are proud in the decking of themselves after their antic manner? why are they going with their bull's-foretops, with their naked shoulders, and paps hanging out like a cow's bag?" (125). Badman dies from multiple causes—"He was dropsical, he was consumptive, he was surfeited, was gouty, and, some say,

he had a tang of the pox in his bowels" (148)—and Wisemen ends their conversation with a Bible-thumping sermon against unclean living.

The language is plain-spoken, and the novel offers a more realistic dramatization than *The Pilgrim's Progress* of the daily challenges Puritans faced living in what they considered a fallen world (with special sympathy for the plight of Christian women married to louts like Badman), but that's the best that can said of it. The form is unoriginal—it closely resembles a popular dialogic work by Arthur Dent called *The Plain Man's Pathway to Heaven* (1601)—and it is as naive and intellectually stunted as its more famous predecessor. But I'll "forbear quirking and mocking," as Bunyan requests (1), and admit *Mr. Badman* has a place in the chain-gang of rogue fiction that eventually leads to novels like Fielding's *Jonathan Wild* and Thackeray's *Barry Lyndon*, as its editors note, though I suspect its true devil-spawn are ludicrous religious novels like the Left Behind series.

Two more picaresque/rogue novels—two of the best—and we'll quit this crime scene.

Don Tomazo, or The Juvenile Rambles of Thomas Dangerfield (1680) is the funniest and most sophisticated contribution to this genre, a self-consciously literary performance that cleverly melds form and content. It is attributed to Dangerfield himself (c. 1650–85), a suave counterfeiter, gigolo, and conspirator, for though it's narrated in the third-person, there are four instances when the narrator "accidentally" slips into the first-person. The narrative conforms to the known facts of Dangerfield's life—he ran away from home at 12, worked his way up from petty theft to counterfeiting, fraud, and espionage—but it is deliberately, even ostentatiously framed as a picaresque novel (hence the Spanish title, his literary persona). In the prefatory address "To the Reader," he praises "The cheats and cunning contrivances of Gusman and Lazarillo de Tormes,"[63] and throughout the novel he refers to himself as "a gusman" and his activities as "gusmanry"—nouns unacknowledged by the *OED* but typical of Dangerfield's playful style. However, he makes a distinction when announcing his grandest scheme: "See here the difference between a Spanish and an English gusman: the one pursuing a poor, hungry plot upon his penurious master's bread and cheese, the other designing to grasp the riches of the fourth part of the world by the ruin of a national commerce"

(390). The scheme fails, but Dangerfield and his partner always think big, not deigning to soil their gentlemanly hands with petty crime: "Neither was for such extraordinary high-soaring gusmans as they to play at ordinary games, whose prodigality was not to be supplied by the dipping of country squires or the little cheats of high and low fullums" (392)—that is, loaded dice, a pointed dismissal of the penny-ante scams of Meriton Latroon and his ilk. Written while Dangerfield was awaiting trial for fomenting a false conspiracy, *Don Tomazo* tries to elicit sympathy for this ambitious, self-made man, who hints that criminal activities like his are "many times the beginning of a trade that advances several to vast and real fortunes" in the legitimate business world (395).[64] He also hints more blatantly at the reader response he expects when he tells us he and his partner-in-crime "told their tale so smoothly that they found very compassionate entertainment among their countrymen" (385–86), and that one of Dangerfield's victims was "so intoxicated with his narrative that he invited him over to his house" (405).

Dangerfield blames his early propensity for crime on the "inconsiderable severity" of his father, which may be just an excuse (he blames his future setbacks on "fortune") but at least he makes an attempt to understand the criminal mind, unlike Head (whose protagonist is merely born bad) or Bunyan (who unoriginally blames criminal behavior on original sin). "They were for the quick dispatch; they were for drink and be rich," because "the toil of keeping accounts was a labour too tedious to their mercurial brains" (389, 396). But the true appeal of *Don Tomazo* is its mercurial wit (a ship concealing soldiers is called a Trojan seahorse), its Wodehousian mix of elegant diction and slang, and its playful appropriation of literary genres. As a 12-year-old, Tomazo falls for the stories his Scottish servant spins about his wealthy estate in Scotland, whence "the young master and the young man, knight-errant like, set forward upon their Northern progress" (354–55), and upon arrival at his rude hovel, the boy "was so far from being over-ravished with joy at the sight that he took it for some enchanted castle" (356). Later he identifies with the parable of the prodigal son, and later still aligns himself with Ulysses, Aeneas, and Saint George, ever the hero of his own romance. Elsewhere Dangerfield appropriates the language of pastoral and heroic romance, though most often he favors the kind of wit that was

lighting up the stages of Restoration theaters. Don Tomazo is a master of disguise as well as a counterfeiter, and *Don Tomazo* is his finest forgery, whereby he impersonates a picaresque hero and forges a document so appealing that it fooled some people into thinking it was an autobiography, and perhaps even fooled its author into thinking he was some kind of literary hero. Or it could have been written by someone else, a well-read conman cashing in on Dangerfield's raffish notoriety and strengthening the conviction of some moralists that fiction-writing was itself a criminal activity. At any rate, it is a near-perfect crime: the last third may lack the sparkle of the first two-thirds, Don Tomazo's partner-in-crime never comes to life, and the narrator ends the novel abruptly by referring the reader to contemporary pamphlets for the details of the conspiracy Dangerfield was charged with. Nonetheless, *Don Tomazo* is a sophisticated English spin on the Spanish picaresque and one of the finest examples of Restoration fiction.

The London Jilt; or, The Politic Whore (1683) brings us back full circle to *The Life and Death of Mrs Mary Frith*, for it too is the first-person narrative of a woman who justifies her unconventional life in wittily vulgar prose. There the comparisons end, because the anonymous *London Jilt* is a far more artful performance. It begins with a hysterical preface that could have been written by Bunyan's Mr. Wiseman, promising the book will alert male readers to "the subtleties and cheats that the misses of this town put upon men . . . to the decay and ruin both of their health, their fortune, and reputation." Warming to his subject, he froths at the idea of such "female ambuscados": "And indeed what greater folly can there be than to venture one's all in such rotten bottoms, and at length become the horror and detestation of all the world, only for a momentary pleasure, and which in truth cannot well be termed pleasure considering what filthy, nasty, and stinking carcasses are the best and finest of our common whores? A whore is a but a close-stool to man, or a common-shore that receives all manner of filth; she's like a barber's chair, no sooner one's out but t'others in, or as another has likened 'em to Sampson's foxes, who carry fire in their tails to burn the standing corn."[65]

By calculated contrast, the female narrator of *The London Jilt* (identified only once as Cornelia) is calm and reasonable, mildly sarcastic and

levelheaded as she tells how she drifted into prostitution, how she defrauded only those customers who defrauded her, and how she prospered well enough to retire and become a successful lace merchant after she lost her looks and, significantly, lost her appetite for sex. She insists that women have a sex drive almost as strong as men's, but that social attitudes force them to dissemble this with hypocrisy and "counterfeit" attitudes. (The word "counterfeit" appears here almost as often as it does in *Don Tomazo*.) She acknowledges that the male sex drive can be more brutal and irrational —"men show that their bodies have an empire over their minds" (159)—but admits women too "are commonly blind in all their passions, and are so violently passionate in their hatred or their love, even most commonly without any cause, that they exceed all bounds" (119). The frankness with which Cornelia discusses and dramatizes these "petulant" passions is unusual in the literature of the time.

The narrator becomes a prostitute at an early age almost naturally, not the result of poverty or a violent abduction, just a typical career path for a lower-class London girl, and thereafter she treats it merely as a job. (It's significant that *before* she became a prostitute, she learned how to entertain family guests "by telling one pleasant story or other" [50], for there's an implicit parallel throughout the novel between whoring and storytelling.) Noting that her mother once, during a time of financial distress, earned money by her "buttocks," Cornelia writes: "tho' several men of a nice and disdainful humor make it a trade to criticize upon persons who make their profit on that part of the body, yet I do not think that herein they have any great reason, for the fist and tail are made of one and the same flesh, and sweating is as easily got by that as by the most laborious trade that is exercised" (53). Unlike some jilts she can mention, she exercises her trade in a professional manner, invests in an annuity, and is able to retire at a reasonable age like any smart businesswoman. She's not immoral but amoral, just telling it like it is, "very little concerned whether [her observations] were conformable or not with the profane or holy philosophy" (155).

The novel's structure is generated by "the desire of revenge, [which] takes its birth jointly with the female's, and remains with them until that they have given up the last gasp" (147). The first dramatic incident the young Cornelia witnesses is the robbery of her father by a smooth-talking rope-

dancer (trapeze artist), who hits the girl as he escapes and threatens to cut her throat. Years later, halfway through the novel, Cornelia recognizes him as one of her customers and plays an elaborate trick on him involving women's clothes and a coffin. (This is a very funny book, by the way.) And near the end of the novel, the rope-dancer returns in an elaborate counterrevenge scheme that is brilliantly narrated. This narrative arc is supported throughout by other minor acts of revenge that Cornelia takes against cheating customers, *always* in retaliation against their frauds, and always handled fairly. In situations where she can rob them blind, she takes only the amount due for her services, not everything as male criminals usually do in other Restoration crime novels. Contrary to the hysterical preface, the novel is not a warning to men to avoid prostitutes but to treat them fairly, and to realize their flattering compliments are merely part of the show.

The London Jilt's realistic depiction of a whore's life and its evenhanded social criticism of men and women are evidence that its author wanted to make a contribution to the growing use of verisimilitude in fiction. Before Cornelia recognizes the rope-dancer near the end, who is disguised as "a middle-aged woman dressed like a citizen's wife," "she fell to telling a story which seemed as if it would never have been at an end, insomuch that I began to conceive some suspicion that this was only the pretext to some concealed design. I had so much the more reason to be jealous that tho' this story was told after a pertinent manner enough, yet there was such prodigious and such romantic circumstances that it could not be taken to be made up altogether of pure truths, and particularly amongst persons who have somewhat more understanding than what's common in the world" (151). This is obviously a critique of the romantic fiction favored by middle-aged citizens' wives (then and now), and *The London Jilt* presents a more realistic alternative, one that does not reinforce the oppressive status quo ("some concealed design") but offers "pure truths" about the relations between men and women. The author runs contrary to romantic plotting by downplaying traditionally key events like the loss of her virginity ("of no great importance" [74]) and her wedding day, focusing instead on the daily activities of a whore, digressions on the uses of makeup, dealing with pregnancy and partner abuse, and sex scenes that are more emetic than

erotic.[66] *The London Jilt* was probably *too* realistic for readers of the time—and its audience limited by the fact it was published by a vendor of erotica whose shop was next to a bar in Fleet Street—but its artful construction and clear-eyed view of sexuality is admirable, as is Cornelia herself. 'Tis a pity she's a whore, else she'd be cried up as one of the most admirable female narrators in early English fiction.[67]

The Restoration period was a glorious time for English literature, producing memorable poetry (Milton, Butler, Dryden, Traherne, Rochester), plays (Wycherley, Congreve, Etherege, Vanbrugh), and biography/memoir (Walton, Aubrey, Wood, Pepys). The only novelist generally associated with this period is the mysterious Aphra Behn (1640–89); after a murky career that included a stint as a spy (code name Astrea), she turned to playwriting and then to fiction near the end of her life. Salzman praises her for producing "thirteen novels which encompass the whole range of influences operating on Restoration fiction" (313), but that is misleading: she published only one full-length novel, and four novellas; the rest are short stories, "novels" only in the older, Italian sense of novel anecdotes. That full-length one is the best-selling *Love Letters between a Nobleman and His Sister* (1684–87), Behn's first attempt at fiction and the first significant epistolary novel in English literature.

This is the pornographic novel that the frisky fops who bought *The London Jilt* were expecting. Published in three installments, the first part is sensational, a masterpiece of erotic intrigue based on a contemporary scandal. Taking advantage of the tabloid interest in the affair between the 27-year-old Lord Grey and his 17-year-old sister-in-law, Lady Henrietta Berkeley, as well as the fad for epistolary novels translated from the French, Behn cunningly begins her novel not at the start of their relationship but a day before the couple plans to consummate it, fanning not "a beginning flame" but "a settled flame that is arrived to the highest degree."[68] Concealed in a farmhouse near Silvia's family estate, hot-blooded Philander arranges to sneak into his sister(-in-law)'s room the following night—even though they are merely in-laws, their affair qualifies as incest in 17th-

century terms—and the first 50 pages count down the hours with mounting excitement as the couple exchanges letters via sneaky servants. Both are "raving" with desire, thrilled at the criminal nature of their forbidden relationship—Silvia especially practically comes at the thought: "I have a thousand streams of killing reflection that flow from that original fountain!" (49)—and in "disordered" prose they arouse each other with rhapsodic expectations for the big night. (If they didn't masturbate to each other's letters, I'll eat my hat. As the narrator says in part 2, a letter "discharges the burden and pressures of the lovesick heart" [221].) The immediacy of the epistolary form tightens the tension: as night falls, they keep exchanging notes with text-messaging frequency, their letters functioning as foreplay. And then? In a sheepish letter sent the next morning, Philander not only apologizes for going limp before Silvia's "surrendering gates" (56), but recounts how he was almost raped by her father after he sneaked out of Silvia's room disguised as her maid. (Surprising Philander in the garden, the randy old gent "clapped fifty guineas in a purse into one hand, and something else that shall be nameless into the other" [61].) Still eager to give her soft swain a second chance, still set "to break all laws of decency and duty" (78), Silvia has better luck with Philander the next time, as she purrs in a postcoital letter. Discovered and threatened by her family, she runs away from home and joins Philander in Paris for three months of adulterous bliss before he is jailed for taking part in a political conspiracy. He escapes to Holland, and part 1 ends as Sylvia agrees to his plan to disguise herself as a boy and join him.

Sex and politics intertwine throughout, beginning with the imagery in Philander's first letter to his "baby" (the first English novel, I believe, in which a guy calls his girlfriend that) where he explains "that after a thousand conflicts between love and honour, I found the god (too mighty for the idol) reign absolute monarch in my soul, and soon banished that tyrant thence" (11). Philander is plotting to overthrow the king, and his affair with Silvia is obviously analogous to his rebellion against the laws of the kingdom. (They also cross party lines: he's a Whig, she's a Tory.) The personal is the political in this novel, and as a royalist Behn could not countenance such disloyalty, which may be why she both mocks the lovers' passions and dramatizes them in exultant, incendiary prose. Even before Philander's reader-teasing flop and comically humiliating encounter in the

garden, Behn describes how one of his letters accidentally fell into the hands of Silvia's mother who, pretending in front of a neighbor that it was addressed to Silvia's maid, "turned it so prettily into burlesque love by her manner of reading it, that made madam the duchess laugh extremely" (53). By all accounts a passionate woman, Behn empathizes with the young lovers, but as a loyal subject she mocks them as traitors.

Behn had to wait and see what Lord Grey and Lady Berkeley did next before she could resume writing. After they absconded to Europe (Henrietta married Grey's servant to get out from under her parents' legal control), Behn embroiled the young and the restless couple in a soap-operatic plot that gets a little kinky. At night onboard a ship to Holland, Philander's servant Brilliard "lay so near as to be a witness to all their sighs of love, and little soft murmurs, who now began from a servant to be permitted as an humble companion," though restricted to aural sex (125). A handsome Hollander named Octavio takes them under his wing and falls for the pretty lad that accompanies Philander (Silvia in drag), suspecting and hoping he is a she, but whom "he resolved to pursue, be the fair object of what sex soever" (124). Silvia, "pleased with the Cavalier in herself, begged she might live under that disguise . . . which did not only add to her beauty but gave her a thousand little privileges which otherwise would have been denied to women," like flirting with other women (126). A broad-minded bisexual herself, Behn seems to be having fun with all this even as she continues to treat her protagonists as criminals on the lam.

A bitextual romp that has it both ways, part 2 alternates between letters and prose as the plot thickens: for political reasons Philander goes into hiding for a few months, during which time both Octavio and Brilliard begin to lust for Silvia—back in provocative women's clothing (Behn often notes her slutty fashion sense)—which the jilt sidesteps by way of a complicated bedtrick involving both of them, her maid Antoinette, and an overdose of aphrodisiacs, while Philander falls for the young, convent-bred wife of a 70-year-old man, writing to Octavio with all the juicy details of how he seduced her without knowing she's Octavio's sister. (Philander also seduces her maid, living up to his name as a horny philanderer and thereby relieving Octavio and Brilliard of their loyalty to him.) It would have been a formidable technical challenge to convey all this new material in epistolary form, a challenge Behn was apparently in too much of a hurry to face. Then

again, she was nothing if not resourceful, and a decade's experience writing for the theater would have aided her, but the third-person narrative is a more convenient way to explore the characters' psychology and motives. (Some of it is in the present tense, which retains some of the immediacy of the epistolary mode.) In a way, the contents forced her hand: in part 1, the two principals write sincerely to each other in love's rhetoric, "for true love is all unthinking artless speaking, incorrect disorder, and without method, as 'tis without bounds or rules" (188), so the letters speak for themselves. But in part 2, the letters are written "with all the art and subtlety that was necessary" for all four characters to pursue their private ends (200), including forgery in Brilliard's case, all of which would be difficult to follow without Behn's director's commentary. In a metafictional glimpse of the novelist at work, Silvia writes a letter in response to one of Philander's, rethinks it and writes/discards two alternatives, adds more to her first letter, rereads Philander's and adds a little more, then re-rereads his letter and adds even more—a more effective dramatization of her seesawing emotions than a series of postscripts to her first letter would have conveyed had Behn stuck to a strict epistolary format. An adulterated form suits her adulterous couple. Make that polygamous: part 2 ends as Silvia accepts Octavio's marriage proposal, conveniently forgetting that she is legally married to Brilliard (who may be already married) and essentially Philander's common-law wife—*and* a few months pregnant. Plus, Philander is still married to Silvia's sister. As I said, a real soap opera.

The third and longest part, published two years later, is entitled *The Amours of Philander and Silvia*, with *Love Letters* et cetera relegated to the subtitle, and quite rightly so, for this part contains the fewest letters. But the prose is prosaic, summarizing rather than dramatizing events that were no longer front-page news. By this time (1687), Lord Grey had disgraced himself in the Monmouth Rebellion of 1685—a failed attempt to prevent the Catholic James II from succeeding the Protestant Charles II—and Behn had busied herself writing a few plays and other works. By the time she returned to *Love Letters*, she seems to have lost some interest in it and wrote it just to wrap up the story and make a few pounds. Instead of imaginatively recreating what her protagonists might have gone through, she mostly sticks to recorded history (as Todd's annotations reveal), merely substituting her characters' names for the real ones. A sympathetic critic

could argue that the shift from passionate love letters to prosaic summary formally enacts the deterioration of Philander' and Silvia's relationship, but I suspect the shift was more a matter of expediency than strategy. "He writ in haste and disorder," the narrator says of one of Octavio's letters, "as you may plainly see by the style" (296). Part 3 is longer than the others for the same reason Pascal gives a correspondent for an overly long letter, apologizing that he didn't have time to make it shorter.

The plot continues to grow more sordid: Octavio decides to postpone his marriage to Silvia until she is "delivered of what belonged to his rival" (316; we never learn what becomes of the baby), moving in with his uncle who promptly falls in love with Silvia, who strings him along until the night he is accidentally shot as he surprises them having sex, which forces Octavio to go on the run. Philander impregnates Octavio's sister and then helps her steal away from home, during which she shoots her aged husband. (She is so disgusted at Philander and herself afterward that she becomes a nun.) Double-dealing Silvia alienates both Philander and Octavio (who, like his sister, joins a monastery), and craftily allows long-suffering Brilliard to have his way with her to keep him under her thumb. The Duke of Monmouth, a pretender to the throne, is introduced in the person of Cesario, who is as lusty as Philander, underscoring Behn's equation of political treachery with illicit sex: Before he is shot, Octavio's uncle lectures him that "to neglect the nation for a wench is flat treason against the state," and that wenches like Silvia are the equivalent of spies and deserve to be shot (281). I can imagine what he would have thought of Cesario's mistress, who is into witchcraft and employs a sorcerer to aid her lover's political ambitions. Behn continues to play with gender confusion and homosexual desire—Philander is aroused to see how closely Octavio's sister resembles his friend, and Silvia returns to crossdressing and almost teases a young nobleman into switching teams—implicitly condemning all these destructive, dishonorable characters as deviants from political, religious, and sexual orthodoxy. The novel ends with the failed rebellion, partly due to Philander's betrayal of Cesario on the battlefield, but only the pretender suffers. Cesario's lover dies of grief, but her sorcerer gets off scot-free, Silvia runs off with her pimp Brilliard "and daily makes considerable conquests where e'er she shows the charmer," and Philander is forgiven and

“came to Court in as much splendor as ever, being very well understood by all good men” (439).

That sardonic conclusion would have been unthinkable by most earlier novelists. Bunyan would have sent them all to hell, and others would have at least put the worst possible construction on their fates. But worldly Behn knows better: “Let the censuring world say what it would who never had right notions of things, or ever made true judgments of men’s actions” (425). This is the way of the world, not the way of the romance novel. She makes it clear she opposes acts “beyond the musty rules of law and equity” (399), but she also shows considerably sympathy for these scoundrels, acknowledging that cheaters often prosper and, if nothing else, make for good copy.

There are a few admirable scenes in part 3, as when Silvia and Octavio sit next to each other in silence as the narrator darts back and forth between their thoughts, and the comic transformation of Octavio’s uncle from a Talibanic misogynist—“Whip ’em, whip ’em, replied the uncle, I hate the young cozening baggages. . . . He said if he were to make laws, he would confine all young women to monasteries where they should never see man till forty, and then come out and marry for generation sake, no more” (285)—to a foppish lover. Octavio’s public induction into holy orders is narrated in a luxuriant, sensuous manner that has the female audience swooning. There’s a necromantic scene that anticipates Gothic horror, and the erotic realism throughout is startling, considering this was a novel intended for general audiences (unlike *The London Jilt*). Behn’s depiction of the boredom and disgust that creeps into a relationship based on sex is modern, as is her psychologically acute portrayal of people who return to ex-lovers no matter how badly they were mistreated. So despite some stylistic laziness, part 3 brings the novel to a strong, morally complicated conclusion. Fortunately, the sum is greater than its parts, making *Love Letters between a Nobleman and His Sister* a milestone in the development of the English novel, and even “the first English novel” in the opinion of at least one critic.[69]

The first-person narrator who gradually encroaches on part 3 of *Love Letters*, accounting for how she came by certain information and even witnessing one episode, gate-crashes Behn’s most famous novella,

Oroonoko, or The Royal Slave (1688), and turns this exemplary history into a story about herself. This is one of the earliest examples of a conflicted narrator—like Ishmael in *Moby-Dick*, Marlow in *Heart of Darkness*, Nick Carraway in *The Great Gatsby*—for whom a charismatic figure forces a reevaluation of his or her moral values. The first word of *Oroonoko* is "I," and the reader needs to keep an eye on that pronoun as she tells the exotic story of an African prince who falls in love with a woman named Imoinda, only to see her claimed by his grandfather for his harem. In a replay of the older/younger men rivalries in *Love Letters*, Oroonoko sneaks into the harem and has sex with her before his impotent grandfather can, but he is devastated when he hears a false report of her death. Shortly after, he is tricked into slavery and transported to Surinam (then an English colony on the northeast coast of South America), where his inherent nobility and non-African good looks exempt him from slave labor. He is delighted to learn that Imoinda is not dead but in Surinam as well, and pregnant with their child. But when Oroonoko suspects his English "hosts" do not intend to fulfill their promise to return him and his new family to Africa, he leads a poorly conceived slave revolt, which is easily put down. He is tortured, and vows revenge, willing to die in the effort if necessary: he first kills his wife (with her eager assent), but then lingers for days around her beheaded corpse and loses the strength and will to resist when the English colonists track him down (via the corpse stench). They then slowly mutilate him in one of the most gruesome scenes outside Foxe's *Book of Martyrs*, and the novella ends with the narrator's vow to enshrine his memory in her book.

The novella has been read as a critique of slavery and colonialism, but such readings miss the point. Oroonoko himself captures and sells slaves, and when his fellow blacks cave, he angrily admits he made a mistake "endeavouring to make those free who were *by nature* slaves, poor wretched rogues fit to be used as Christians' tools; dogs, treacherous and cowardly, fit for such masters . . ." (66; my italics). *Oroonoko* is not about slavery or race but about nobility and honor; he has those qualities, the other Africans don't, and the real evil (Behn implies) is failing to distinguish between those who are by nature noble and those who aren't. It's a matter of character, not race, for many of the white colonists are also "treacherous and cowardly." One of them "was a fellow whose character is not fit to be mentioned with the worst of slaves" (64). Nor does the narrator

condemn colonialism; she wishes only that Charles II had appointed better administrators, had recognized Surinam's potential, and hadn't traded it later to the Dutch for Manhattan. Colonialism isn't the problem, the narrator feels, only colonial mismanagement by dishonest, ignoble people.

It is religion, not slavery or colonialism, that receives the brunt of Behn's criticism. Oroonoko's diatribe against his fellow slaves continues: "they wanted only but to be whipped into the knowledge of the Christian gods to be the vilest of all creeping things, to learn to worship such deities as had not the power to make them just, brave, or honest" (66). The novella is a sustained attack against not merely those Christians who don't live by Christian principles, but against religion itself. The novella begins with the narrator's rapturous description of Surinam's Edenic qualities, adding, "religion would here but destroy that tranquillity" (11). She contrasts Oroonoko's "heathen" morals with the "ill morals . . . practiced in Christian countries, where they prefer the bare name of religion and, without virtue or morality, think that's sufficient" (17). When Imoinda is ordered to join the elderly king's harem, she receives "the Royal Veil," which evokes the Catholic practice of taking the veil by "brides of Christ" solicited for His celestial harem. There's a sharper dig at Catholicism when the narrator explains why the Surinam natives would make easy converts: "by the extreme ignorance and simplicity of them, it were not difficult to establish any unknown or extravagant religion among them, and to impose any notions or fictions upon them. For seeing a kinsman of mine set some paper afire with a burning-glass, a trick they had never before seen, they were like to have adored him for a god, and begged he would give them the characters or figures of his name that they might oppose it against winds and storms, which he did, and they held it up in those seasons and fancied it had a charm to conquer them, and kept it like a holy relic" (58). This isn't imperialistic condescension but a recognition of the superstitious nature of all religions. The narrator is one of the English colonists and dutifully makes an effort to instruct Imoinda and Oroonoko in "the knowledge of the true God" in addition to other Western beliefs, "But of all discourses [Oroonoko] liked that the worst, and would never be reconciled to our notions of the Trinity, of which he ever made a jest; it was a riddle, he said,

would turn his brain to conceive, and one could not make him understand what faith was" (49).[70]

Oroonoko understands faith as a bond between honest people, and learns "there was no faith in the white men or the gods they adored who instructed them in principles so false that honest men could not live amongst them" (66), and this is what *Oroonoko* is ultimately about: the challenge of being "a model of absolute virtue isolated in a politically and socially corrupt environment," as Ros Ballaster writes, a "dramatization of the destructive confrontation between a concept of absolute moral justice . . . and the contingencies of political and social survival."[71] Oroonoko's self-martyrdom convinces the narrator that religion is not a solution but a contribution to that corrupt environment.

By the end, it's clear that *Oroonoko* is as much about the narrator's moral growth as it is about the title character's destruction. The narrator is essentially Behn herself, who evidently spent a few years spying in Surinam in the 1660s (when the novel is set) and who refers at one point to a play she had just written. Although she claims in the first paragraph to be telling a true story, she created the fantasy figure of Oroonoko as a beard behind whom she could express doubts about many of the verities she grew up with: the superiority of whites over blacks, of Western values over pagan, of Christian practices over heathen, and so on. She uses the African as a ventriloquist's dummy to express subversive ideas that would have drawn fire if uttered in her own voice, such as her criticism of Charles II's colonial policies, and sometimes acts embarrassed at what her "dummy" says: During one of his diatribes against Christianity, she cuts him off in the middle of "a thousand things of this nature, not fit here to be recited" (66). Nonetheless, she admires both Oroonoko and Imoinda and boasts of the role she played in finishing their Western education: "I entertained him with the lives of the Romans and great men, which charmed him to my company, and her with teaching her all the pretty works that I was mistress of, and telling her stories of nuns. . . ." (49).[72] Sometimes she takes center stage, daringly so when she describes her female party's first encounter with Surinam Indians as Oroonoko watches from the bushes: "By degrees they grew more bold, and from gazing upon us round, they touched us, laying their hands upon all the features of our faces, feeling our breasts and arms,

taking up one petticoat, then wondering to see another, admiring our shoes and stockings, but more our garters, which we gave them and they tied about their legs, being laced with silver lace at the ends, for they much esteem any shining things. In fine, we suffered [allowed] them to survey us as they pleased, and we thought they would never have done admiring us" (57). This extraordinary spectacle is intended for the reader as much as it is for Oroonoko, a demonstration that she is as brave and unabashed as men are (just as in her plays Behn showed she could be as bawdy as any man).

This demonstration of female bravery and freedom from sexual stereotypes makes the narrator's subsequent display of stereotypical female cowardice all the more shocking. After Oroonoko is captured and tortured, she makes a stunning confession: "You must know, that when the news was brought on Monday morning that [Oroonoko] had betaken himself to the woods and carried with him all the Negroes, we were possessed with extreme fear, which no persuasions could dissipate, that he would secure himself till night, and then that he would come down and cut all our throats. This apprehension made all the females of us fly down the river to be secured, and while we were away, [the English colonists] acted this cruelty. For I suppose I had authority and interest enough there, had I suspected any such thing, to have prevented it . . ." (68). This is a devastating admission of bad faith and betrayal, a reversion to the worst racial fears, and a rejection of individuality as she blends in with "all the females." Writing this novella 20 years after the alleged events is an attempt to redeem herself, to man up and show as much courage as Oroonoko did in denouncing debased Western ways. Her courage failed her then, and she apologizes halfway through that Oroonoko has "only a female pen to celebrate his fame" (43), but she concludes her tale on a more confident note: "I hope the reputation of my pen is considerable enough to make his glorious name to survive to all the ages, with that of the brave, the beautiful, and the constant Imoinda" (76–77).

To do so, Behn had to clean up her black heathen to make him an acceptable tragic hero for English readers. Despite its African and South American settings, *Oroonoko* is essentially a European romance in blackface. Rather than make Oroonoko authentically African, Behn makes him as European as possible in looks and education (he had a French tutor and speaks English); one of her first references to him is as a "gallant

Moor," which evokes Shakespeare's Othello, as does his murder of his wife at the end. The only difference between Imoinda and the "constant" maidens of romantic fiction is that she's covered in tattoos. There's considerable novelty in the settings, of course, which has led one critic to call *Oroonoko* "the earliest American novel," but the exotica is mostly window-dressing for what is at heart a heroic romance.[73] What's new is the graphic violence, the "noble savage" character type that would attract Voltaire and Rousseau in the next century, and especially the complex narrative stance, where the first-person narrator is not the protagonist (as in most first-person novels) but a combination of spectator, co-protagonist, and authorial persona. In one sense *Oroonoko* is the story how Behn found her voice as a confident, sophisticated, heterodox novelist, and if true she dashed this off at one sitting, that's one more reason readers "will never have done admiring" her.

The 450-page *Love Letters between a Nobleman and His Sister* is an anomaly; with few exceptions, most English novels published during the last two decades of the 17th century are *Oroonoko*-size novellas that expanded the novel's palette, as that exotic romance did. Like Behn, Alexander Oldys (1636–1708) was a playwright who turned to fiction, adapting stage techniques for two short and innovative comic novels. *The Fair Extravagant* (1682) consists mostly of dialogue and soliloquies; indeed, "what we have here is a stage comedy in narrative form," as Mish observes.[74] It begins like a takeoff on *Don Quixote*: a rich teenage heiress named Ariadne lives in London in a house she has decorated with paintings of "Don Quixote and Sancho Panza, which hung just over against Amadis de Gaul, and directly opposite to Oroondates and Cæsario in combat when they had mistaken one another, with many more fantasticks" (3). Her library, like Alonso Quijana's, is an incongruous mix of the good and bad, updated to reflect a Restoration lady's indiscriminate reading habits:

> Nor were her books better matched. Here you might see Frances Quarles bound up with George Withers, Sir John Suckling and Sir John Denham, Randolph and Broom, Shakespeare and Jonson (though they could hardly ever agree before), Beaumont and Fletcher (you know) always were together; many other modern poets were piled in a heap: my Lord

> Rochester was laid aside, only Mr. Cowley stood alone; but what was most pleasant of all, this satirical pretty lady bound Rabelais with Dod upon Cleaver.[75] In short, here lay a play, there a sermon; here an academy [academic treatise], there a prayer-book; here a romance, and there a Bible: not but that she was a good Christian for all this I dare say. Now be pleased to take notice, when she was weary of singing and dancing, she did often read in one or other of these books, especially romances, for she was a great lover of knight errantry, and was a little that way addicted. . . . (3–4)

On the edge of 17 and "weary of that oppressing weight of a maidenhead, which I have labored under these five long years" (5), Ariadne decides to sally forth caparisoned as a man in search of a suitable husband. Along with her cousin Miranda (who looks cute in pants), they visit Richard's Coffeehouse, where Ariadne pertly holds her own in discussions of current events, and then attend a performance of Thomas Otway's domestic tragedy *The Orphan*, where they meet a man-about-town named Polydor who strikes Ariadne as suitable husband material, especially after they go for drinks afterwards at Locket's. (Like *The London Jilt* but few other novels of the time, *The Fair Extravagant* is realistically site-specific.) Ariadne makes a deal with the cash-strapped Polydor to marry her "cousin" (herself) sight unseen—"I am playing the knight errant to serve this lady" (21)—which he reluctantly agrees to do the following morning. (He forgot to buy a ring, but offers one "which a French mistress of mine gave me at Paris," to which the unflappable heroine reacts not with outrage but a shrug: "it must and shall do" [43].) Repenting her hasty marriage later that day, Ariadne decides to test Polydor's worthiness over the next week by convincing her cousin Dorothea to pose as her, and other shenanigans. Our female Quixote submits Polydor to ludicrous tests taken from romance literature, but Polydor is also a Quixotic figure, her "enchanted squire" as Ariadne calls him near the end (167), and the butt of the same kinds of pranks played on the Knight of the Sorrowful Face and Sancho Panza. Predictably, he passes the tests and the novel ends with additional marriages between the secondary characters.

The Fair Extravagant looks back to *Don Quixote*, obviously, but more significantly looks forward to *Tristram Shandy*. Unlike novelists like Behn, who insisted their fictions were true, Oldys's narrator flaunts the fictitiousness of his novel, apparently making it up as he goes along. There are lines like "she lodged—let me see!—somewhere about St. James's" (3), and forgetful mistakes, such as when the wedding party "made all reasonable haste to the Bowling Green that could be expected. Cry your mercy, I mean to the church. But I had been oftener at the first, which made it come sooner into my thoughts" (43). He chafes under the rules of fiction: when he grows a little too warm in his description of Miranda's looks, he breaks off and reluctantly acknowledges that *the heroine* must be the most beautiful woman in a novel. During a conversation between Ariadne and Polydor, he perfunctorily inserts some filler and then loses his train of thought: "I see then (said Miranda) you are both in a fair way to be happy. —You know I must make her speak something, and not let her sit there like a mute all the while, much contrary to the humour of her sex. Well—But—now or about this time they got within sight of the steeple . . ." (44). Like Furetière (a likely influence), and as Marivaux and Sterne would do later, he sometimes grows testy with nitpicky readers (not that he has earned their confidence): "But (perchance) you will ask me why she did not take her own coach and horses to perform that journey? for certainly that was easier, and looked greater! But did ever I tell you she kept a coach? yes, now you shall know she did. However, she foresaw the inconvenience if she had met Polydor in her own coach; and besides her servants would have been witnesses of what she intended to conceal had she returned to town with them about her. And again, I believe she was willing to spare her own horses. Now are you satisfied?" [63–64].[76] Throughout, Oldys interrupts the narrative with irrelevant asides, condescends to the conventions of the novel, and mocks the ridiculous, literature-inspired ideas of readers like Ariadne, resulting in a novel that is highly artificial but quite realistic (natural dialogue, sharply observed city life, characters with names like Tom and Harry, etc.). When Polydor tries to summarize his crazy adventure, he says, "'Tis pure knight errantry" (138), and Oldys leaves us with the egg-on-the-face feeling that novel-reading and -writing is just a foolish game played between silly people—readers and novelists—perhaps even a

scam played by indigent authors on gullible female readers. Oldys admits to his male dedicatee that he wrote this "trifle" only because he needed the money, but asks his friend not to let the ladies know that.

The Female Gallant, or The Wife's the Cuckold (1692), published by Samuel Briscoe "over against Will's Coffeehouse, in Russell St., in Covent Garden"—now a Starbucks—is likewise dialogue-heavy, site-specific, and gender-fluid by way of crossdressing disguises. It too is a comedy, but a vicious one: set during the short reign of James II (1665–68), it is a snooty, royalist, Catholic satire of tacky, Whig, Protestant nouveau-riche types, contemptuous of their gauche attempts to claw their way into aristocratic circles, as evident from its opening paragraph:

> Sir Beetlehead Gripely lived in a great, ugly, old-fashioned house, somewhere in the City,[77] in a place almost as obscure as that of his birth, and *as dark as his deeds*; and was a money scrivener, which (as I am told) is a *devilish good occupation*. In this he got, within the space of seven years, an estate of near £12,000 and purchased him a wife of his own household, worth twice as much for her incomparable qualities had she been exposed to sale at a more convenient market. Her unmarried names (I won't say her *maiden names*, though she was his chambermaid) were Winny Wagtail, of the great and notorious Wagtails in Castle Street, near Long Acre, not far from the Square where, at present, I have an apartment. But upon her marriage to Sir Beetlehead, she was dignified and distinguished by the name and quality of the Lady Gripely, by whom the knight had issue only Philandra, a lady of most prodigious and various qualifications. (1–2)

I'll let Paul Salzman summarize the intricate plot:

> In this novel we are introduced to Philandra, an amorous, beautiful, and deceitful young lady, who is courted by Sir Blunder Slouch, a wealthy "*Norwich* Factor" (p. 7), and two gallant gentlemen, Bellamant and Worthygrace. In courting her, Worthygrace in particular shows his honesty. Although he and Bellamant admire each other, they duel for her hand. When each fancies he has killed the other, the plot speeds up: they go into hiding, and Philandra is informed of their deaths. Bellamant

> disguised himself as his twin sister Arabella, while Worthygrace, taking refuge in Paris, sends his sister Henrietta, disguised as their brother Horatio, to see Philandra. Worthygrace falls in love with the real Arabella in Paris; Philandra, on being told by Henrietta of her disguise, persuades her to marry the false Arabella as a joke. She in turn dresses as a man to "seduce" Arabella—whereupon Bellamant reveals himself, and reverses the seduction. When the disguises, after a suitable amount of titillation, are all shed, Bellamant marries Henrietta in earnest and Worthygrace marries Arabella; while the scheming Philandra, her reputation still intact (for Bellamant cleverly pretends to have been disguised as Arabella in Paris all the time, and therefore Philandra is thought to have innocently shared Arabella's bed) marries Sir Blunder. (322–23).

It's not as fun as it sounds. There are very few paragraph breaks, giving the novel an oppressive, claustrophobic feel, as though you are locked in a room with all these scheming people. Furetière's sardonic influence is acknowledged when we remember that his novel was mistakenly published in English as *Scarron's City Romance*: the author flippantly tells us that Philandra looks "extremely like our late famous duchess now in France, as nearly resembling her as the knight of Tunbridge," adding modesty, "or myself resemble the figure of the late incomparable Scarron" (7). As in *The Fair Extravagant* there are some authorial asides, as when Philandra's mother gives her some bad news "in a doleful key (perhaps in *gam-ut* or *C-fa-ut*. In which most of our famous farewells are set)" (96). If Oldys's first novel anticipates Sterne, *The Female Gallant* anticipates Fielding, that "old enemy to the arriviste mentality allegedly promoted by Richardson's *Pamela*," as Nicholas Hudson calls him, "a man proud of his own claims to tradition gentility, [who] saw no greater social danger in England than the breakdown of traditional social hierarchy and the masquerade of social ambition" (588). Less enjoyable than Oldys's first novel, *The Female Gallant* is just as significant in the development of the English novel, and both deserve to be better known.

I had been looking forward to reading a 1684 novella entitled *Erotopolis: The Present State of Bettyland*, attributed to Montaigne's translator Charles Cotton (1630–87), but this learned piece of misogyny is nearly void of narrative. It is merely a geographical description of a country based on the

female anatomy, with predictable schoolboy snickering over mounds and swamps, hot and cold weather (moods), and so forth. This is the sort of thing Swift would condemn a dozen years later in *A Tale of a Tub*: "that highly celebrated talent among the modern wits of deducing similitudes, allusions, and applications, very surprising, agreeable, and apposite, from the pudenda of either sex, together with *their proper uses*" (section 7). About halfway through, a few characters borrowed from Petronius's *Satyricon* appear and recoil in horror from their tour of the brothel district of a large city, obviously based on London, and then it's back to more extended metaphors about the unforgiving geography of Bettyland. It's ostentatiously learned, turgid with quotations in Greek and Latin, a male text set in opposition to the female tastes of shepherdesses of Bettyland: "they are always reading *Cassandra*, *Ibrahim Bassa*, *Grand Cyrus*, *Amadis de Gaule*, *Hero and Leander*, *The School of Venus*, and the rest of these classic authors, by which they are mightily improved both in practice and discourse" (59–60). But the extended metaphor is hoary, the fictional elements are negligible, the insults cheap, so we'll leave *Bettyland* for more fertile pastures.

I had *not* been looking forward to reading *The Martyrdom of Theodora, and of Didymus* (1687) by the chemist Robert Boyle (1627–91), younger brother of the author of *Parthenissa*. Sure enough, it's a stupefyingly dull, overwritten attempt to convert hagiography to romance. It retells the legend of an early-4th-century Christian woman who was consigned to a brothel for refusing to worship the Roman gods, allegedly rescued by her admirer Didymus, who showed up disguised as a customer and then changed clothes with her so that she could escape. She has a long conversation with her friend Irene about why she loves being a virgin, and after hearing that Didymus has been discovered and sentenced to death, she tries to rescue *him*. (No word on whether he had to service anyone before he was exposed.) Both argue at length before the Roman authorities over who should die for whom until the impatient judges execute them both.

Boyle wrote an early version around 1648, which is very much in the spirit of the French heroic romances of the time, with additional plot elements evidently taken from Corneille's first flop, *Théodore, vierge et martyr* (1646).[78] Forty years later, disgusted at the loose morals of

Restoration jilts and fops like those in Oldys's novels, Boyle decided to revive his youthful effort; he couldn't find the first half of his original manuscript, so he summarized it in his preface and rewrote the second half, publishing it as "book 2" and beginning in the middle of the story just as Didymus visits Theodora in the brothel for the first time.[79] It is stilted, religiose, and peopled with cardboard characters; Samuel Johnson called it the first "attempt to employ the ornaments of romance in the decoration of religion," but even he didn't like the style.[80] The only interesting thing about the novel is the preface, in which Boyle wrestles with the challenges of using the profane romance genre to tell a sacred story: the heroine must be beautiful, but not sensuously so; the love expressed between the leads must be spiritual, not carnal; historical details must be supplied (especially when few exist, as with Theodora's martyrdom) but not so fancifully that they violate history; the story must be romantic enough to attract and to hold novel-readers, but religious enough to convert them to Christian principles; and so on. It's interesting to see him struggle with all this at a time when French literary theorists were arguing over the same issues, and which are faced by most "writers of disguised histories," as he calls them, compounded in his case by the difficulty of "rendering virtue amiable and recommending piety to a sort of readers that are much more affected by shining examples and pathetic expressions than by dry precepts and grave discourses" (8). Consequently, "I was induced to allow myself a more fashionable style than would perhaps be suitable to a mere sermon or book of divinity, because I feared that the youthful persons of quality of both sexes, that I was chiefly to regard, would scarce be sufficiently affected by unfortunate virtue if the interweaving of passages relating to beauty and love did not help to make the tragical story delightful, and the excellent sufferers' piety amiable" (9). But as usual when a serious man in his sixties tries to write something hip that will appeal to kids, it falls flat. Had Boyle published the original 1640s version back when there was a taste for such things, it might have worked—it reads much better than the verbose later version—but compared to the sophisticated novels that were appearing in the '80s, *The Martyrdom of Theodora* comes across like a leisure-suited geriatric dancing the Hustle.

A good example of the kind of sophisticated novel Boyle's was up against is *Clitie* (1688) by Richard Blackbourn, who died just before it was published, according to the preface by Nahum Tate. In Salzman's opinion, "*Clitie* is perhaps the closest English novel to *La Princesse de Montpensier* and *La Princesse de Clèves* written at this time" (328). Like Lafayette's most famous novel, it concerns a young girl (only 13 in this case) who gradually realizes she is surrounded by malicious people and becomes "possessed with a mortal hatred against mankind in general" (82) and yearns to leave it all behind. No sooner is she released into the shark tank of the court of Louis XIV than she becomes the victim of spiteful gossip by court ladies and the object of amorous attention by two aristocrats, decent Darbelle and caddish Amasis. The former kills the latter for boasting he's enjoyed Clitie's favors (she has been lukewarm at best toward both of them), and flees the king's wrath to Italy, which endears him to our heroine. A prince named Lysidor, reminiscent of Lafayette's Nemours, begins aggressively courting Clitie to her annoyance as she and Darbelle continue to exchange loving letters, but Lysidor buys off her maid Mariana, who steals their mail and spreads rumors that Darbelle has married an Italian woman, and later that he has died. Believing this lie, worn down by the persistent prince, Clitie reluctantly marries Lysidor but is haunted at a ball by Darbelle disguised as a ghost, who has returned to find out what's wrong. They realize they have been victims of foul play, and then face further machinations as the prince and Mariana try to do away with Darbelle and further confuse Clitie, but eventually all is revealed and the novel ends with the king and Clitie's father giving the reunited couple their blessings.

Like *The Princess de Clèves*, *Clitie* alternates between outer actions and inner thoughts, another example of the shift toward interiority in some other novels of the period. The narrator often allows us to eavesdrop on his characters as they struggle to make sense of what's happening: "Darbelle knew not what construction to make of her silence. Sometimes he would suspect that she was changed, and false; sometimes that she was either dead, or extremely sick; for he thought certainly were she not dead, or false, it could not be but she would have writ to him; again, he found that the last letters she sent were in a style most soft and kind . . . that he could not apprehend that she who made such a show to him, as Clitie did, could so

soon fall from one extreme to another. All these things rendered him in a perplexing incertitude" (71–72). In realistic contrast to the absolute certainty enjoyed by religious fanatics like Boyle's Theodora, Darbelle and Clitie live in "perplexing incertitude," and we tap into her mind as well:

> She entered into a deep musing, so that she seemed immovable; she leaned against one of the sides of the theatre, ruminating of a thousand things one after another, and knew not what she should believe. Mariana's brother had [falsely reported he had] seen Darbelle married, and La Rock [Darbelle's valet] swears he never was, but that he had always loved her most tenderly; she considered that Mariana's brother's assertions were the foundations why she herself had married, which was the occasion of Darbelle's death, after she had been the cause of his misfortunes. Calling to mind all the afflicting adventures, she could not refrain from pouring down floods of tears and giving herself up to an excess of sorrow which had took possession of her heart. (146)

Critic Maximillian Novak singles out this scene as an example of a newish narrative technique that Blackbourn didn't sufficiently exploit: "There is a moment in *Clitie* in which the heroine is at the theatre watching a play. We see nothing of the play but rather learn what is passing in her heart. These internal reflections do not last very long, but for that time we might be at the theater with Catherine Morland in Austen's *Northanger Abbey*" (130). This isn't quite accurate—Clitie is not watching a play but waiting for it to begin—but it correctly praises Blackbourn for moving toward interior monologue.

The concluding section of the short novel is louder and more melodramatic, departing from the "soft manner" (198) of the first two-thirds, and like Clitie herself, *Clitie* may have been the victim of foul play. Salzman wonders if "Blackbourn lost his nerve, or perhaps he did not even write the final part, which is headed 'The third and last Part, being an addition to the two first Parts' " (326). I suspect Nahum Tate, who was responsible for publishing this after the author's death: he was notorious for rewriting Elizabethan plays, giving *King Lear* a happy ending, for example. The narrative arc suggests a darker conclusion, as in *The Princess de Clèves*, than we have here. At any rate, *Clitie* successfully updates

traditional romantic motifs with more modern epistemological concerns and psychological introspection.

The big book came back with a bang in 1691 with the publication of a 3-volume, 450-page novel entitled *A Voyage round the World; or, a Pocket Library . . . which contains the Rare Adventures of Don Kainophilus . . . The whole work intermixed with essays historical, moral and divine, and all other kinds of learning*. This was the brainchild of bookseller/editor/publisher John Dunton (1659–1733), who wanted to offer his customers something novel, and the result is an eccentric novel that influenced more famous eccentric novels like *A Tale of a Tub* and *Tristram Shandy* (both Swift and Sterne grudgingly acknowledged reading it) and set a new standard for autobiographical fiction. In essence, it's a lightly fictionalized account of Dunton's early life: his birth in Grafham in 1659, the son of three generations of clergymen; his mother's early death; his schooldays, during which it became obvious to his father that he wasn't suited for the ministry; and then his apprenticeship to a London bookseller at age 15. The third volume ends when the narrator is 23 and ready to open his own bookstore. Dunton had planned to continue the story up until age 30 (when he began writing it), but the reading public's indifference to his experiment in autobiography caused him to abandon the 24-volume project.

Dunton's *Voyage* is utterly unlike any autobiographical novel written before it. Though narrated in the first person, it alternates between two narrative personae, almost in Jekyll-and-Hyde fashion. Dunton calls himself John Evander, alias Don Kainophilus, which means a lover of novelty. Insisting that he is not Evander/Kainophilus while dropping numerous hints that he is, Dunton created this dual narrator to reflect two aspects of his personality: Evander is the respectable clergyman's son who dutifully serves an apprenticeship, sets up his own bookstore specializing in religious publications, and marries a lovely woman he calls Iris (and whom he rhapsodically apostrophes throughout, as Sterne would his Jenny). Kainophilus, on the other hand, is a born rambler hungry for novelty and adventure, and expresses himself in flamboyant prose, as in this description of his alter ego: "Evander is a person without flattery, endued with all

accomplishments that nature ever crammed into a jelly of stars to make a cheesecake of. Like the rising run round the head of his Apollo, he is always employed in circumnavigating the sphincter of some myopical primogenity; and sure I am that should Diogenes his tub come to life again, he would be the first man chosen by the States of the Moon to crack chestnuts with a pair of butter-firkins. But to be less Ciceronian. . . .”[81] Nashean might be a better word for it, for like *The Unfortunate Traveler* Dunton’s *Voyage* is written in a maximalist mixture of learned wit, demotic language, goofy metaphors, dialect, literary allusions, poetry—the novel often veers into verse (sometimes Dunton’s own, sometimes “borrowed” from others)—along with, in the words of his carnival barking introduction, “witty songs, riddles, posies, and anagrams. . . . Here’s hieroglyphics and cabalistic treasures as unintelligible, as inestimable, such unheard of curiosities as Gaffarel and Parcelsus[82] never dreamt of nor would have done (though sometimes good wits jump) they are so rare and extraordinary, though they had lived this thousand years” (41–42). Although he acknowledges his use of nonfiction miscellanies like Gaffarel’s book and quirky travel guides like Thomas Coryat’s *Crudities* (1611), he boasts of the originality of his work, and acknowledges only a few predecessors in fiction: “Cervantes among the Spaniards was the first who wrote in this drolling sort of prose satire,” he writes in the preface to volume 2, and tips his hat to both Quevedo’s *Sueños* and Furetière’s *Bourgeois Romance*, “which perhaps is nearer the design here intended than any before mentioned.” It’s that alternative line of fiction (which he traces back to Lucian) that he follows, not that of conventional romance novels, which he warns apprentices against reading, “at least till your mind is formed and you have seen something of the world” (2.8). At times, the text resembles not only *Tristram Shandy* but modern stream-of-consciousness writing, as here when Evander leaves behind some religious disputants and goes down to the Thames to cross the river:

> Let ’em be so kind to fret their gills out if they think fit, while Evander steps down to Old Swan and takes water—Stay,—but ’tis against tide—What if the mills should suck him in—well considered—*An elder brother’s thread is generally twisted very tenderly*.—I’m off of such a

> long ramble—I'll to the Steleyard—The tide runs strong—'Tis good to be sure—Come the Three Cranes is but a little further—or Queen Hithe—And now I'm here, 'tis but edging to Blackfriars Stairs and then there's no danger; Aye,—now—let's see—sure now we're *safe*—be not we, waterman—See how the rogue laughs—but he does not know my value as well as I do, and what a loss the world would have if Evander should feed the fishes. (1.7)

Despite the unconventional nature of his text, however, he insists his "method [is] not confused, though somewhat cryptical, and requiring a little study to crack the shell and get out the kernel" (2.1)—the same image for difficult fiction Mackenzie used 30 years earlier.[83]

But unlike *The Unfortunate Traveler* and all previous first-person novels, the *Voyage* begins *ab ovo*. Working back from his present age of 30, the narrator states, "I am the man—was the boy, the infant—the—the—the chicken—the tread of a cock-chicken—the eye of a needle—the point—the *nothing at all*" (60–61). After speculating on his possible animal ancestry —"As great a coward as I am, there may have gone I know not how many *particles of a lion* into my composition, and as *small as my body* is, my great grandfather might be made out of a whale or an elephant" (1:1)—it's clear he's not speaking metaphorically but genetically, and that he's abreast of the latest scientific discoveries in obstetrics: from "my mother's belly, [I] just rambled *out of nothing*, or next to it, nothing like what I am now, into a little live thing, hardly as big as a nit. Should I tell you, as the virtuosi do, that I was shaped at first like a tadpole, and that I remember very well when my tail rambled off, and a pair of little legs sprung out in the room on it[?]" (1:1). He then goes on to describe his stillbirth and resuscitation.

He's also hip to the latest thinking of the philosophical virtuosi, who had revived the atomic theory of the ancient Greek philosophers Leucippus and Democritus, whereby all physical matter is made up of an infinite number of atoms ("corpuscles" in 17th-century terminology) moving and combining at random in the universe. The *Voyage* portrays just such a universe, a world in flux, especially in the "panegyric verses" Dunton wrote for the first volume, which have lines like "the ship was steered by chance/As chaos was by atom's dance" (12); "Nothing i'th'world is steady

found/But an eternal dance goes round" (13);[84] and "Nothing in Nature's fixed and steadfast found,/But all things run an endless circuit round" (19). Aware of recent discoveries in astronomy, he notes that the so-called fixed stars "Yet ha' been found by optic engines / To've rambled backward a whole sign since" they were first "fixed," and some planets "move by eccentric's epicycles" (13). The fixed universe of the medieval worldview (and three generations of Dunton clergymen) had been exposed as unfixed, unstable, "steered by chance," eccentric; as a thoroughly modern author in the current battle between the ancients and moderns, Dunton consequently gives his novel a modern form, for it too is eccentric, chaotic, and digressive. Although the *Voyage* proceeds in roughly chronological fashion, it constantly leaps forward, "rambles backward," and/or darts sideways into digressions, following the "atom's dance" in what Kainophilus is pleased to call his mind instead of the fixed assumptions of how a story should be told.

The *Voyage* is less an attempt to tell his story than "to reflect on my own self. . . . I followed my self in my busy imagination from cradle to grave," as he tells us in the introduction, where he boasts "I can nowhere find my parallel, and am apt now to believe what I thought too much my friends have sometimes been pleased to compliment me with, that I was indeed *an Original*" (35–36). He decided to write this song of myself whether the world was interested or not: "What, thought I with my self very soberly, if I should oblige this world now, this ungrateful world, with a *history of this strange life of mine*:—Hang it—it doesn't deserve it. Yet I may do it for my own sake, not theirs" (37). This is a remarkable assertion of the value of the private individual; there are plenty of "lives and actions of great princes," but here the reader "will find the life of one traveler, my individual self, Don Kainophilus, alias Evander, the whole description of, I scorn to say one country, one age, or one world, but of all the habitable and unthinkable *Creation*" (39). Dunton greatly admired Montaigne and cites him often in the third volume, but his attitude here has the cosmic confidence of Walt Whitman.

Throughout the *Voyage*, Dunton/Evander/Kainophilus makes metafictional asides on what he is writing, and defends his unconventional narrative choices. Sterne obviously took note of the beginning of chapter 6, for example, when young Evander sees London for the first time:

> Now does the reader greedily expect a description of London, aye, and such a one it shall be when it once comes that shall put down a Stow's *Survey*, Howell's *Londonopolis*,[85] Delaune, R. B., and all that ever writ on it since London-stone was no bigger than a cherry-stone, or Julius Caesar built the Tower. I question not in the least, no not in the least, but 'twill pit, box, and gallery with—let me see—with, aye, with Jordan's Lord Mayor's show, or his successors either, though that's a bold word that's the truth on it.
>
> By this time I guess the reader is big up to the chin with expectation, as Mrs. Abigail and her little master at Bartholomew Fair when they are just a-going to begin for two or three hours together, & to satisfy his curiosity, I tell him now whatever I made him believe in the last chapter, that he's not like to hear a word more on it this *two hours*. Thus do I love to elevate and surprise, and *sprinkle* now and then some of that same in my writings which is so *remarkable* in my self—that people should miss what they expected, and find what they never looked for—though both still very excellent—nor must you think I do this without sound advisement and sage reason . . .

. . . which is that he wants to finish the story of his father from the previous chapter. He spends a page justifying this structural choice, then concludes: "Well then now you have it; you can't miss it if ye had never so much mind to it. Vol I. Chap. 6. The Life and Death of Evander's immediate Male Progenitor. [All this pains I take now to make the matter clear, and instruct even the meanest capacity how to make the best use of this most useful Book.] Why then, stand by London, and room for father" (1:6).[86]

This self-consciousness about writing permeates the novel as Dunton plays with the idea of the world as a book, and people as texts. Instead of an errata page, he substitutes this couplet: "The author hath his faults, the printer too/All men whilst here do err, and so do you" (34).[87] Later, Evander confesses, "were I to correct the errata of my short life, I would quite alter the press," adding a few pages later, "Return we now to my life again, wherein not a line have I written but has need of correction" (3.1), collating both his life and his written account of his life. He compares different sizes of people to "quartos, folios, and decimosextos" (2.1), as

Melville would later do with whales. He comically compares his worn clothes to "an old or dusty translation," then runs "to the barbers for a new face [typeface], for you must note my beard as yet was but of the third edition . . ." (3.4). In a punning poem written earlier in his career entitled "The Ingenious Art of Printing Spiritualized," Dunton compares the Christian god to a typesetter ("Great blest Master Printer"), concluding,

> The world's a printing house, our words, our thoughts,
> Our deeds are characters of sev'ral sizes;
> Each soul is a compositor, of whose faults
> The Levites are correctors, heaven revises.
> Death is the common press, from whence being driven,
> We're gathered sheet by sheet, and bound for heaven.[88]

The "voyage" of the book's title is really a voyage round the world of books: by way of quotation, citation, and allusion, Dunton tells us more about his reading than his living. His life is almost literally an open book, and he's proud of his bookishness: "It has been said of accomplished persons that they have read men as well as books; and why is there not as great a commendation belongs to those who have traveled books as well as men, and brought thence the gold and precious jewels . . ." (43), which is partly Dunton's way of justifying his plagiaries, but largely a justification for a life spent reading rather than traveling. Even though he did in fact travel a good deal—including a voyage to Boston—he filters almost everything he sees through books he has read, as in the example above about London. And finally, he compares writing to voyaging: "when I have my pen in my hands and subject in my head, I look upon my self *as mounted my horse to ride a journey*" (3.1).

Not surprisingly, Dunton dresses his novel in every fashion of bookish finery. There are 60 pages of preliminaries before the reader gets to the first chapter of the novel: (1) a foldout frontispiece depicting 24 scenes from the original conception of the novel;[89] (2) a poem "In Praise of the Ensuing Design"; (3) a 97-word title page, excessive even by 17th-century standards; (4) "A Poetical Explanation of the Frontispiece," summarizing the complete novel in 24 stanzas; (5) nine "Panegyric Verses, by the Wits of

Both Universities" (i.e., by Dunton) praising the first volume; (6) the two-line poem "To the Reader Instead of the Errata"; (7) "Introduction"; (8) "The Impartial Character of a Rambler"; (9) "Evander's Character"; and (10), a preface by "Evander alias Kainophilius." (Volume 2 begins with a "Preface to the Booksellers of London" and further "panegyric verses"; volume 3 limits itself to an "Epistle Dedicatory.") The text itself sports different fonts and point sizes, excessive italics and dashes, footnotes and marginalia. "In its use of developments in print technology," J. Paul Hunter observes, "mixing of narrative and expository strands, inclusivity of other quasi-related documents, didactic insistency, and playful refusal to move the story forward while savoring its own obsessive reflexivity, *Voyage* is technically way ahead of its time" (336). "But the *Voyage* is not an artistic success," he concludes, which I hate to admit is true. The first volume is terrific, but the second is a bit of a letdown as Dunton wastes too much time at the beginning responding to critics of the first who didn't "know what to make on't" and denying he's the author; in the third, the conventional John Evander has taken over from the logomaniac Kainophilus, and by the end of the volume, Dunton is recycling magazine articles he had written a few years earlier (the first incarnation of this project). There's some great stuff in the second two volumes, but Dunton was probably right to abandon ship at that point. *A Voyage round the World* is not a great novel, then, but it's great fun and has great implications for the future of literary fiction.[90]

In his capacity as bookseller, Dunton published the following year a novel even bigger and almost as eccentric as his. An employee of his named Charles Gildon (c. 1665–1724), a Grab Street hack later skewered by Swift and Pope (as Dunton himself was), proposed an unusual sort of epistolary novel: not a monologic one like *Letters from a Portuguese Nun*, nor a dialogic one like Behn's *Love Letters*, but a polylogic collection by over a hundred correspondents. Gildon "borrowed" the idea (as Dunton acknowledges in his preface) from an Italian novella entitled *Il Corriere svaligiato* (1643) by Ferrante Pallavicino (1615–44), where a nobleman orders his courtiers to steal a packet of politically sensitive letters, which they read and discuss before passing them along to their master. It was later imitated in Jean de Préchac's novella *La Valize ouverte* (1680), which Gildon may also have known.[91] Scribbling furiously up in his garret,

Gildon compiled *The Postboy Robbed of His Mail* (1692–93), an 800-page epistolary novel consisting of nearly 200 letters. It opens with an introductory one from a young spark named Timothy Weleter to his grave mentor, defensive at first but growing defiant, in which he explains how the collection came about: one of the members of his all-male social club recently received a letter misaddressed to him in which a young girl repulses the sexual advances of an old lecher considered a pillar of the community. After reading it aloud to his mates, he is topped by another club member who confesses that after a postman accidentally bumped into him, he stole his mailbag and read some of the contents with an equal amount guilty pleasure. Bored because of the rainy weather, all 10 members of the club decide to mug 10 postal carriers, dump the mail on a table, and spend a day going through them, forwarding those that are worthy and urgent, and publishing the rest of them in this book.

Weleter's defense of their criminal actions doubles as a defense of fiction (which some critics then, as we've noted, regarded as a crime against decent society). He argues by implication that novelists are doing more valuable work than the serious scientists his mentor wants him to emulate: "For while your virtuosi are poring over the unaccountable secrets of Dame Nature, we are busy in searching into full as intricate a subject, the humors and natures of men. While they are conversing with labor and study with the mineral, vegetable, and animal kingdoms, our pleasure leads us in chase of the secrets of the rational world. Their studies may have the face of more harmless innocence, but I'm sure our delights are more profitable, and more to the purpose of living" (1:4). Defending the literary novel's turn toward interiority (but mindful of the "more profitable" fad for scandalous "secret histories"), he lectures his elder: "No man almost is what he appears to be; we are all Januses and have two or more faces in all our actions, as well as designs" (5); he goes on to quote a fellow member, the serious Mr. Grave, "That the world being a masquerade, where borrowed visors so disguised every one that none knew even his own acquaintance if not privy to his dress, letters were the pulling off the mask in a corner of the room to show one another their faces" (9). In the context of Gildon's tabloid-spirited novel, this is all merely a cheeky defense of what Mr. Grave and Mr. Winter admit is a serious crime that may land them in jail (all the members have symbolic names), but in the context of the debates over the purpose and

value of fiction at the time, young Weleter posts a warning to his mentor's generation that the novel—especially the epistolary novel, "for we are apt to write that in a letter to a friend which we would not have all the world know of" (9)—is no longer just escapist entertainment but an instrument for unmasking hypocrisy and plumbing "the unaccountable secrets" of human nature.

Volume 1 begins boldly: the first letter the boys pluck from the pile is "From an Atheist or Modern Wit, Laughing at All Religion," in which a man named Wilson tries to dissuade his friend from taking holy orders. It is impudent and funny, and is followed by a few pages of commentary by the club, setting the pattern for the rest of the volume. The second is from a misanthropist, the third from "a mighty affecter of similes," the fourth from an aspiring poet to an editor (including samples of his work), and the fifth is actually to one of the club members, who is forced to read it aloud. This is followed by a dizzying array of other letters, all dated June 1692, in wide variety of styles: begging letters, letters of condolence, of recommendation, complaints, job applications, business advice, gossip, accusations, legal notices, travel accounts, a report of a ghost sighting, of a dream, philosophical speculations, theological arguments, fashion bulletins, authors asking publishers for more money, and love letters between almost every imaginable pairing (a dwarf and a tall lady, a black man and white woman, a hermaphrodite and a female lover, a mother and her daughter's fiancé, a Quaker and a Quakeress, et al). There are letters in dialect, in astrological doubletalk, and even one in numerical code, with an editorial promise that the key will be provided in volume 2. Toward the end we get letters that are essentially mini-essays on various topics (against nuns, against the vices of the French court, the frailties of women, in defense of cuckolds, the education of boys, etc.), with commentary from the group. The longest is an Italianate novella "Containing Several Accidents Which Happened to a Young Man in Rome," by which point we realize Gildon was a hack tossing in everything he could lay his hands on. But at the end of the day (and of volume 1), the members are "highly pleased with the variety of humors, multitude of follies, and diversity of fancies and caprices which had come to our knowledge in so many different letters" (370), which is likely to be the game reader's assessment as well.

After the first volume is published, the club meets again to prepare a second volume, this one consisting mostly of packets of related letters instead of separate ones, and as a result is more derivative and less successful. Capitalizing on the success of Marana's *Turkish Spy*, Gildon begins with a 13-letter sequence from an Asian named Honan about his tour of Spain in 1686, follows this with "ten letters full of a great deal of wit and satire" (2:117) from an unnamed correspondent to his friends, then a lengthy letter containing *The Secret History of Cornaro Villicano, Doge of Venice*, a novella of romantic intrigue that is thankfully interrupted by the dinner bell and never finished. The club resumes with 10 love letters between "Lysander" and "Belvidera" (as the club members decide to call them), then 14 miscellaneous essay-letters like those near the end of volume 1 on a variety of topics (hypocrisy, kissing, Christian sects, a history of English beggars, a two-line letter in faux Greek, etc.) including a deciphered version of the coded letter earlier (which turns out to be merely a note from a girl telling her sister she's left some porn in a box beneath her window: *The School of Venus* and my Lord Rochester's poems). At this point, a constable shows up investigating a report of mail theft; after they smooth-talk their way out of that, the lads leg it for London to put the finishing touches on volume 2. It concludes with 18 love letters sent in response to publisher Dunton's request in the preface to volume 1 for romantic correspondence (which will remind some older readers of the premise of *The Red Shoe Diaries*). Although these 70 or so letters are interlaced with the club's sharp comments as in the first volume, and even though they likewise expose the "great variety of the follies and vices of mankind" (2:101), they read less like the human comedy of volume 1 than the work a hack who "strangely faggoted up diverse pieces," as Dunton would say (*Voyage* 3:1). Although the announced plan was to publish 6 volumes totaling 500 letters, Dunton abandoned the project at this point and later added it to the short list of books he wished he had never published, along with his *Voyage round the World*.[92]

In early 1692, the year former dramatist Alexander Oldys published *The Female Gallant*, the future dramatist William Congreve (1670–1729) anonymously published a novella entitled *Incognita*, which is better known

for its preface than for its narrative. There, Congreve makes an oft-quoted distinction between romances and novels:

> Romances are generally composed of the constant loves and invincible courages of heroes, heroines, kings and queens, mortals of the first rank, and so forth, where lofty language, miraculous contingencies, and impossible performances elevate and surprise the reader into a giddy delight. . . . Novels are of a more familiar nature, come near us, and represent to us intrigues in practice; delight us with accidents and odd events, but not such as are wholly unusual or unprecedented, such which, not being so distant from our belief, bring also the pleasure nearer us. Romances give more of wonder, novels more delight.[93]

But this isn't very helpful, for Congreve refers only to the degree of realism in book-length fictions—novels can be "unusual or unprecedented," just less so than romances. There was also the question of length: for many at the time, the term *novel* simply meant a work of fiction shorter than the longer (French) romances; the Earl of Chesterfield put it this way in a letter to his son: "A novel is a kind of abbreviation of romance."[94] Consequently, the two terms continued to be used almost interchangeably into the 19th century. The full title of Congreve's fiction is *Incognita; or, Love and Duty Reconciled: A Novel*, but in the sense most people today use that final word, the novel reads like a romance. Hark ye:

Two teenage aristocrats residing in Siena, Aurelian of Florence and Hippolito of Spain, return to Aurelian's hometown to learn that he has been engaged by his father to a young lady named Juliana. Hiding out from Aurelian's father, the young men switch names, don disguises, and attend a masked ball, where Aurelian falls in love with a witty beauty who calls herself Incognita. The next day, Aurelian further curries her favor by performing in a joust, and later assists her when, learning that her father has engaged her to a relative stranger, she disguises herself in men's clothes and heads to a monastery, where Aurelian just happens to be wandering and rescues her from a ruffian. His friend Hippolito has fallen for a girl named Leonora, who is now jealous that her friend Juliana is engaged to Aurelian (as Hippolito is now calling himself), so she agrees to a quickie marriage

with him. Eventually, the disguised lovers and their baffled fathers confront each other, and of course Incognita turns out to be Juliana, as the experienced reader already guessed back during the masked ball. True, the lads don't battle any giants or get abducted by pirates; and true, a comedy of errors like this could conceivably happen in real life, but any reader expecting a *realistic* novel on the basis of Congreve's preface would be grievously disappointed.

But he's right that novels "delight us," for *Incognita* is a delightful, urbane performance. As one might expect from the future author of *The Way of the World*, it is cleverly plotted and well paced—the entire novella elapses over three days—and features scintillating dialogue (though not as much as in Oldys's novels). *Incognita* is not a milestone in the transition from romance to novel, as sometimes claimed, but a winking homage to older forms of fiction, specifically the French *nouvelle* and the Spanish novella as adapted by Paul Scarron.[95] The novel often parodies romance diction, as when the two teens "sallied or slunk out of their lodgings and steered towards the great palace whither, before they were arrived, such a prodigious number of torches were on fire that the day, by help of these auxiliary forces, seemed to continue its dominion. The owls and bats, apprehending their mistake in counting the hours, retired again to a convenient darkness; for Madam Night was no more to be seen than she was to be heard, and the chemists were of opinion that her fuliginous damps, rarefied by the abundance of flame, were evaporated" (14). The narrator follows this immediately with: "Now the reader I suppose to be upon thorns at this and the like impertinent digressions, but let him alone and he'll come to himself, at which time I think fit to acquaint him that when I digress, I am at that time writing to please myself; when I continue the thread of the story, I write to please him. Supposing him a reasonable man, I conclude him satisfied to allow me this liberty, and so I proceed" (14). It is metafictional remarks like this that make *Incognita* a delight, for after defining the novel in his preface, Congreve continues to comment on novelistic conventions as he proceeds. Well into the masked ball, he remembers he has not yet told us what Incognita is wearing, as a more conscientious novelist would have done earlier: "I should by right now describe her dress, which was extremely agreeable and rich, but 'tis

possible I might err in some material pin or other, in the sticking of which maybe the whole grace of the drapery depended" (20). When she unmasks herself, he proclaims her beauty "is not to be imagined till seen, nor then to be expressed," then pauses: "Now see the impertinence and conceitedness of an author who will have a fling at a description which he has prefaced with an impossibility." But he gives it a fling anyway, a bizarre one at that: "One might have seen something in her composition resembling the formation of Epicurus his world, as if every atom of beauty had concurred to unite an excellency" (31). After one too many digressive asides, he promises the reader, "I do not intend to do it again throughout the story" (45), but these asides are *Incognita*'s best features. It's as though we're not reading a novel but listening to a charming raconteur, snifter of brandy in hand, tell us a story he once heard in his younger days: his manner is more entertaining than the matter. It's a winning performance, especially if it's true that Congreve was barely 18 when he wrote it.

Incognita has much in common with a short, anonymous novel published the following year, *Vertue Rewarded; or, The Irish Princess* (1693), the first literary novel set in Ireland in the modern era.[96] Specifically, it is set in the town of Clonmel, County Tipperary, in the summer of 1690 just after the Battle of the Boyne, in which the English Protestant army defeated the Roman Catholic forces of the deposed James II. A German prince fighting for the English passes triumphantly through Clonmel and spies an Irish beauty named Malinda. Both are attracted to each other, but since he's an aristocrat and she's merely a member of the local gentry, he's interested only in a brief affair, while she holds out for a marriage proposal. The wartime setting lends itself naturally if predictably to martial imagery, giving an edge to his talk of assaults and conquests, and hers of conditions and honorable terms. Eventually, love pulls rank on ambition, and the prince marries Malinda on the final page of the short novel. Her virtue is rewarded, of course, but so is his: the novel is more concerned with *his* struggle to act virtuously than with hers, bucking the double-standard of much romantic fiction.

That subtle tweak of literary conventions is one of many ways *Vertue Rewarded* recalls *Incognita*. It is sub-subtitled "A New Novel" and goes out of its way to distinguish itself from romance, as when the narrator excuses

the prince's failure to take Limerick: "the days of errantry are past, nor have our warriors now such swords as those of knights of old that could hew a way through the thickest walls, and do wonders greater than our age will believe" (114). Yet the characters' names are straight out of romance (Malinda, Celadon, Astolfo), as are the plot elements (disguises, interpolated tales, conveniently overheard conversations, serenades, fortune-telling, even a magic well), and occasionally the diction ("Now had the active Sun run through our celestial sign, and his pale sister the Moon gone through her monthly course and changed her orb . . ." [123]). Like Congreve, the narrator displays a rather arch attitude toward his materials and occasionally addresses the reader, usually to explain why he is forgoing an expected description: "I will not set down how many of these fits of joy and grief he had whilst he was in the camp; neither will I romance so much as to write down all the thoughts he had of her, and all the many wise dialogues he had with himself about her; those the reader can better imagine than the author tell" (110). *Vertue Rewarded* doesn't have a critical preface like *Incognita*'s, but it does have a truculent "Preface to the Ill-Natured Reader" in which the author states "whether you believe, or disbelieve, like, or dislike [the novel] is indifferent to me" (37). Again like Congreve, the narrator offers a sophisticated spin on an old genre rather than something new, but he accomplishes this with confident artistry. For example, there's a point near the end when two comic subplots seem to overtake the main one, which the narrator compares to "the main wheel of a clock, though it turns all the rest, yet goes itself with such an insensible motion that to an unskillful eye it seems to stand still" (131); sure enough, we later learn that Malinda participated in one of those subplots, moving the main wheel of her plot without the reader's knowledge. Earlier, the narrator had expressed the hope the reader would "sympathize exactly with His Highness's thoughts as two clocks, well made, keep time with another" (110). The novel may be based on an old design, but the author draws our attention to its clockwork structure and Old World craftsmanship.

New World horrors are the most unusual feature of *Vertue Rewarded*, still a novelty five years after *Oroonoko*. An outlandishly dressed visitor shows up one night at a ball to reveal herself as a South American princess; during the short novel's longest interpolated tale, she explains how she fell in love with a Spanish soldier during a war with the neighboring Inca—with lots of

lurid details involving blood sacrifices, cannibalism, and witchcraft—then accompanied him to Spain, got separated, and made her way to Ireland in the hope of finding him. (She does; this is a *romance*, after all.) Based on *The Royal Commentaries of Peru* by Garcilaso de la Vega—the same source Françoise de Graffigny would draw upon 50 years later for *Letters from a Peruvian Woman*—the exotic tale anachronistically describes events that occurred a good century earlier, but it shines a disturbing colonialist light on the relationship between the invading German prince and the besieged Irish virgin that complicates the novel's happy ending.

Congreve may have been only 18 when he wrote *Incognita*, but Catharine Trotter (1679?–1749) might have been only 14 when she anonymously published her first and only novel. *The Adventures of a Young Lady* (1693; aka *Olinda's Adventures*) resembles a monologic epistolary novel, but it's closer to French memoir-novels like Villedieu's *Memoirs* (see pp. 246–49 above) in that it consists of seven long letters recounting the story of her early life addressed to a platonic male friend called "Cleander" (the names are romantic, but the novel is realistic), followed by two short, uncharacteristic letters to her future husband, which were probably added by the book's editor. Now 18 and living alone in the country, Olinda tells Cleander how she lost her father at an early age, which reduced her and her mother to straitened circumstances in London. Consequently, her mother wants to marry her daughter off, and over the course of these letters Olinda comments pertly on the "catalogue of lovers" who sought her hand beginning at age 13.[97]

Unlike the aristocratic cast of most romance novels of the time, Olinda's suitors include a goldsmith, an old Dutch colonel, and several fops and soldiers, some of whom are already married. The most eminent is the powerful and respectable Cloridon, who encounters Olinda when she's 15 and thereafter arranges for several clandestine assignations under the guise of helping her mother with certain matters. Naive Olinda is surprised when the middle-aged married man reveals his love for her, but is kinda flattered, and eventually agrees to allow him to settle her in the country until his wife dies, which she does at the end of the short novel. Olinda leaves her correspondent hanging as to what happens next.

Olinda is neither the virtuous maiden of earlier fiction nor the "lewd creature" one rejected suitor calls her, but rather a typical teen, though a little smarter than most. (She tosses off references to Aristotle, Luther, and Dryden.) Of the first guy who shows interest in her, she admits, "I was well enough pleased with the love, though not with the lover, for 'tis natural at that unthinking age to covet a crowd of admirers, though we despise them" (1). She teases and leads some of them on, taunts others for insincerity, and though she can be mischievous and spiteful, she exhibits the kind of sprightliness found in the heroines of later novels like Riccoboni's *Letters from Lady Catesby* and even Jane Austen's. She's not eager to get married, telling her correspondent: "though I was never an enemy to marriage, yet I always preferred a single life to it" (7), and earlier in the same letter—justifying her decision to marry someone else when Cloridon looked unavailable—she shrugs unromantically: "since my circumstances would oblige me to marry, and that I knew I could never love any man, I thought it might as well be he as any other." This statement, coming after her remarks in letter 3 about her "love" for a girlfriend named Ambrisia (whom she is now encouraging her correspondent to marry), leads Josephine Donovan to find in Trotter's novel "one of the first expressions of a lesbian feminist standpoint" (85), especially since Trotter herself is known to have enjoyed some lesbian flings before she married a curate in 1708.

Olinda's indifference to marriage, her wariness of romantic clichés, her resolution to overcome passion with reason—"many of our sex have ruined themselves for want of time to think" (6)—and her cagey dealings with the middle-class marriage mart set her apart from most 17th-century heroines, and set *The Adventures of a Young Lady* apart from other novels of the day. As Day concludes the introduction to his reprint, this petite novel "ably anticipates in embryo so many features which the English domestic and realistic novel would develop in its age of maturity and popularity" (vii).

Trotter published her first play in 1696, but that year her older friend Mary Pix (1666–1709) outdid her by publishing two plays *and* a novel, *The Inhumane Cardinal; or, Innocence Betrayed*. No critic is likely to praise this lurid novel's "feminist standpoint," for the moral of the story, as the author points out to her female readers on the penultimate page, is "to beware the insinuations of the designing part of your own sex" (236). The designing woman in question in Donna Olympia, a niece of Pope Innocent X (1644–

55) and one of the most powerful women in Rome. She dotes on the corrupt cardinal Antonio Barbarino, the pope's nephew, but when he confesses he's in lust with the French ambassador's daughter, Melora, Olympia offers to help him satisfy his "violent desires." Like Merteuil and Valmont in *Dangerous Liaisons*, they set about their plan with ruthless efficiency.

Interestingly enough, the main tool they use is fiction. Soon after Olympia makes Melora's acquaintance, she narrates the "The History of Alphonsus and Cordelia," a typical romantic adventure that ends happily and encourages Melora to welcome the cardinal's advances because he disguises himself as a character from that that novella: a storybook hero come to life, in Melora's naive eyes. Later, to encourage her to risk parental disapproval, Barbarino gets his favorite, Francisco, to narrate "The History of Emilius and Lovisa," another romantic adventure in which a father comes to regret his attempt to force his daughter to marry another man. (These two tales take up 150 of the novel's 237 pages.) Thus *The Inhumane Cardinal* is a novel exposing the danger of novels, especially to gullible readers like Melora who "took delight in nothing more than hearing the histories of persons where the caprices of Fortune had been most evident" (115). Emboldened by the second story, she agrees to a secret marriage to the disguised cardinal, and for "six months this insatiable priest revels on that luxurious banquet, blooming youth and yielding beauty" (213). Eventually satiated, he decides to poison her; meanwhile, Francisco has repented of his participation in her seduction and decides to tell her the "true" story—and if this were a romance of the sort Melora liked to hear, he would arrive in the nick of time and save her. But in this novel, he arrives too late, Melora drinks the poison, and she becomes the tragic heroine of "this sad story" (235).

Although *The Inhumane Cardinal* isn't great literature—it was presumably written to cash in on the fad for scandalous "secret histories" of famous people, and the style is undistinguished (except for slipping in and out of the present tense)—it stands apart from other novels of the period because of its bleak view of human nature: as Constance Clark comments, "its unidealized and cynically desolate ending resembles more a Jacobean tragedy than the prose fiction of its time. It is pervaded with the Jacobean sense of life as passionate, cruel, and corrupt."[98] Though written by a

woman, it is unusually harsh on women—Pix harps upon their vanity, ambition, duplicity, and gullibility—and it is one of the few novels of the time that makes explicit reference to sodomy (225). Like other novelists of the 1690s, Pix mixes romance and realism, putting new wine into old bottles.

The most inventive, profound, and mindblowing novel of this time straddles the 17th and 18th centuries. The brilliant Irishman Jonathan Swift (1667–1745) wrote most of *A Tale of a Tub* between 1695 and 1697, but didn't publish it until 1704, when it appeared in an anonymous volume along with two shorter satires of his, *The Battle of the Books* and *A Discourse Concerning the Mechanical Operation of the Spirit*. The *Tale* is usually described as a "prose satire," a vague term that suits the other two works; however, the *Tale* not only meets the minimal requirements for a novel as *Webster's* and I define the term (a book-length fiction), but thematically, structurally, and visually it can easily be located on the long line of eccentric, erudite novels that stretches from Petronius's *Satyricon* to Sorrentino's *Mulligan Stew* and beyond. In fact, like the latter it can be read as an avant-garde novel satirizing avant-gardism in the person of a desperate writer going mad. True, *A Tale of a Tub* doesn't resemble most novels of its time, but avant-garde novels never do: by definition they are always ahead of the pack, or (if you prefer) out on the lunatic fringe. Nabokov's *Pale Fire* doesn't resemble most novels of *its* time, but it does resemble the *Tale*, as its mentally unstable narrator admits: "I notice a whiff of Swift in some of my notes. I too am a desponder in my nature, an uneasy, peevish, and suspicious man, although I have my moments of *fou rire*" (mad laughter; note to line 270).[99] Only a blinkered, conservative critic would claim that Swift "is not Flaubert or James. He is not, in the sense implied by those names, a novelist at all," forgetting that even those two wrote unconventional, experimental novels (*The Temptation of Saint Anthony*, *The Sacred Fount*).[100] Frederik Smith was right to complain in 1979 that "Critics in our century show a naive reluctance to acknowledge the crucial place of *A Tale of a Tub*—or *Gulliver's Travels*, for that matter—

in the history of the English novel" (125).[101] At a Swift symposium five years later, Maximillian Novak urged fuddy-duddy critics to get with it: "Now that most modern critics have abandoned the notion of the novel as some higher form existing amidst a mass of malformed narrative types, it is time that we pay more attention to Swift's masterpieces as belonging to long established, if not very well delineated, fictional genres" (159).

Actually, *A Tale of a Tub* does resemble one novel of its time, evidently one of the many targets of Swift's satire. Like Dunton's *Voyage round the World*, Swift's *Tale* opens with a parade of preliminaries, and features an eccentric, self-absorbed narrator who leaves erudite droppings throughout the text and delights in digressions.[102] After a title page as wordy as Dunton's (including three passages in Latin), Swift introduces his narrator by way of a list of "Treatises wrote by the same author, most of them mentioned in the following discourses, which will be speedily published." This is as incisive a piece of characterization as a novelist could offer, telling readers virtually everything we need to know about him, for what kind of person would write books like *A Panegyrical Essay upon the Number THREE*; *An Analytical Discourse upon Zeal, Histori-theo-physi-logically Considered*; and *A General History of Ears*, among other works?[103] The 11-title list also alerts us upfront that the narrator is an identifiable character clearly distinct from Swift (who never wrote such books, needless to say), which makes it puzzling why some critics have "rejected the notion of the narrator as 'an identifiable character clearly distinct from Swift' " and argue instead that Swift is speaking "*in propria persona*."[104] The latter would apply only to the "Apology" Swift added to the expanded 1710 edition of the *Tale* (the edition most editors reprint today), and even there it's problematic. At best, we might imagine the recently ordained Swift as a ventriloquist speaking through a dummy: "Though speaking in tongues," John Traugott argues, "playing the fool, the author of the *Tale* is always Swift, but Swift relieved of responsibility and its decorums and hence liberated and energized" (87–88). Still, the narrator is clearly distinct from Swift: he's in his 50s,[105] spent time in Bedlam, now lives in a garret with "a body spent with poxes ill-cured by trusting to bawds and surgeons" (44), is a sucker for occult beliefs, sides with the mods in the ancients versus

moderns controversy, and is scorned by local booksellers as "a clown and a pedant, without all taste and refinement, little versed in the best companies of court and town" (22). He's not the most rounded character in fiction, but he is a fictional character.

Here's a reminder of how the rest of the novel is laid out:

- To the Right Honourable John Lord Sommers (pp. 16–18), written by the ignorant, opportunist bookseller/publisher (also a character), because he didn't like the one the narrator wrote. Most of it concerns the trouble he had writing this dedication.
- The Bookseller to the Reader (p. 19), written in 1704 to explain why he sat on the manuscript for six years ("I thought I had better work upon my hands"), and why he is publishing it now without the author's knowledge.
- The Epistle Dedicatory, to His Royal Highness Prince Posterity (pp. 20–24), in which the narrator defends his work and that of his fellow Grub Street writers.
- The Preface (pp. 25–33), where the narrator explains why and how he wrote the book.
- Section I: The Introduction (pp. 34–45), on various means of communication, and a defense of the use of parables by "Grubæan sages" like the narrator.
- Section II (pp. 47–59): beginning of a parable of the history of Christianity: a dying father gives coats (religion) to his three sons Peter (Catholicism), Martin (Anglicanism), and Jack (Calvinism), along with a will (the Bible), and cautions them not to alter them. After his death, they are seduced by the religion of fashion, and scholarly Peter begins (mis)interpreting their father's will to allow for alterations to their coats.
- Section III: A Digression Concerning Critics (pp. 60–67): narrator distinguishes between traditional scholars and "the TRUE CRITIC," that is, "a discoverer and collector of writers' faults" (62).
- Section IV (pp. 68–79): Peter's inventions and projects (i.e., Catholic scams like purgatory, absolution, "holy" water, ad nauseum) begin to worry Martin and Jack, who reexamine their

father's will and realize they have digressed from the text. Peter kicks them out of their house, which he had confiscated from a lord (i.e., the "Donation" of Constantine).

- Section V: A Digression of the Modern Kind (pp. 81–86): takes the side of modern writers and critics in the ancients versus moderns controversy.
- Section VI (pp. 87–94): Martin and Jack strip down their coats to get back to basics, but while Martin takes a cautious approach to religion, Jack goes fanatical.
- Section VII: A Digression in Praise of Digressions (pp. 95–98). Cf. Dunton's Kainophilus: "I love a digression" (1.8).
- Section VIII (pp. 99–104): on the theology of Jack's "Aeolist" followers, meaning "All pretenders to inspiration whatsover" (99n; i.e., Puritans, Dissenters, Quakers, Anabaptists, et al.).
- Section IX: A Digression Concerning the Original, the Use and Improvement of Madness in a Commonwealth (pp. 105–16). This occupies the position and function of the climax in a traditional novel.
- Section X (pp. 117–21): a further digression on writers, readers, and the book's future critics.
- Section XI (pp. 122–33): Jack's religious practices, and their resemblance to Peter's.
- The Conclusion (pp. 134–36).

To hear him tell it, the narrator has been asked by the government to write something so profound that it will divert "the wits of the present age" from criticizing the church and state, just as sailors throw a tub in the ocean to divert a threatening whale. The narrator sees this as his big chance to write something of more lasting value than his previous "fourscore and eleven pamphlets" (44), something that will engage future commentators. But like the intrusive, self-conscious narrators of other 17th-century novels, his ego gets in the way and he botches the job; for instead of defending his religion and government, he inadvertently undermines them and exposes himself as a madman.

He fails for two reasons (apart from the madness thing): although widely if not deeply read, the narrator does not know how to interpret texts, taking

some too literally, others too symbolically, and others out of context. He's immune to irony, deaf to nuance, and uncritical in his selection of supporting materials. The vital importance of intelligent, discriminating interpretation emerges as the main theme of the *Tale*; it's not merely an attack on Grub Street hacks like the narrator—"Who breaks a butterfly upon a wheel?" as Swift's friend Alexander Pope would later ask—but on the interpretive acts of the critics he admires and emulates (like Richard Bentley and William Wotton). The narrator is a conduit for Swift's contempt for a whole range of scholars and commentators of his time—in science, philosophy, politics, and religion as well as in literature—all reductively and indiscriminately represented by a crazed hack.

Secondly, the narrator can't control his language; he has magpie tendency to make nests of incongruous materials that generate implications and innuendos he never intended. A good example (and a good example why the *Tale* is fun to read) is his praise for the moderns' discovery of

> a shorter and more prudent method to become scholars and wits without the fatigue of reading or of thinking. The most accomplished way of using books at present is twofold: Either first, to serve them as some men do lords, learn their titles exactly, and then brag of their acquaintance. Or secondly, which is indeed the choicer, the profounder, and politer method, to get a thorough insight into the index, by which the whole book is governed and turned, like fishes by the tail. For to enter the palace of learning at the great gate requires an expense of time and forms; therefore men of much haste and little ceremony are content to get in by the back door. For the arts are all in a flying march [retreat] and therefore more easily subdued by attacking them in the rear. Thus physicians discover the state of the whole body by consulting only what comes from behind. Thus men catch knowledge by throwing their wit on the posteriors of a book, as boys do sparrows with flinging salt upon their tails. Thus human life is best understood by the wise man's rule of *Regarding the end*. Thus are the sciences found like Hercules's oxen, by tracing them backwards. Thus are old sciences unravelled like old stockings, by beginning at the foot. (96)

In this jumble of mixed metaphors and silly similes, the narrator unwittingly associates this scholarly method with cowardice (attacking the rear), excrement, and buggery, which in turn taints the theological focus on the end of life.

The narrator's lack of control over language extends to his lack of control over the physical text. Not only is it published without his knowledge, but there are several gaps in the manuscript that the publisher indicates with rows of asterisks and Latin notes, such as "*Hic multa desiderantur*" (110: here much is lacking). The publisher also took the liberty of adding explanatory footnotes, even though in some cases he admits "I do not well understand what the author aims at here . . ." (103n). On the other hand, if the narrator were still alive in 1710, he would have been been chuffed to see that sections from Wotton's pamphlet *Observations upon the* [sic] Tale of a Tub (1705) were added to the footnotes of the fifth edition, giving it the look of a scholarly edition of a classic.

Interestingly enough, Swift is often guilty of the same kind of loss of verbal control, and likewise raises implications he never intended. In his "Apology" and in the footnotes he added to the 1710 edition, Swift often complains that commentators on the 1704 edition "force interpretations which the author never meant" (120n), which they sometimes do, but he forced their hand in many instances. Although he insists, twice, in the "Apology" that he intended only "to expose the abuses and corruptions in learning and religion" (10; cf. 5), his Anglicanism is tarred by the same brush with which he blackens Catholicism and Puritanism, and his Tory conservatism is exposed as smugly reactionary and embarrassingly antiintellectual. As Levine says, "Swift exploits the outlook and methods of perverted subjectivity for the sake of an implied defense of traditional, objective, universalized, values" (226), but some of those values are neither objective nor universal, and are based on traditions that are either outright wrong (deism), prejudicial (to women and the lower classes), or outdated (monarchy). How seriously can we take his political ideology when his narrator provides examples of one king (Henri IV of France) who "raised a mighty army, filled his coffers with infinite treasures [at the people's expense], provided an invincible fleet," and threw Europe into an uproar, all because of "an absent female [14-year-old Charlotte de Montmorency] whose eyes had raised a protuberancy, and before emission she was

removed into an enemy's country" (106), and of another "mighty king" (Louis XIV) "who for the space of above thirty years amused himself to take and lose towns; beat armies and be beaten; drive princes out of their dominions; fright children from their bread and butter; burn, lay waste, plunder, dragoon, massacre subject and stranger, friend and foe, male and female," all because he was suffering from an anal fistula (107)? The narrator gives these anecdotes in support of his thesis that "vapors, ascending from the lower faculties" (105), affect the brain, which can easily be dismissed as ludicrous, but it's harder to dismiss Swift's complacent support for a form of government that enables monarchs like these.[106]

Same with religion: though Swift meant only to attack "the abuses and corruptions" of religion, not religion itself, he mocks so many aspects of it that nothing is left standing, nothing intellectually defensible, that is. "In Swift's day," Traugott notes (as in ours), "religion was not a matter of theology but of church-going and moral guidance" (125n5), but Swift was too smart to ignore the implications of the serious biblical criticism that was underway in the 17th century, which threatened to pull the rug from under Christianity. So while his narrator diverts our attention with the more harebrained examples of biblical exegesis of his day, Swift shouldn't have been surprised that many intelligent readers regarded his book as an attack on religion itself (which it is, and one of the best). Swift may have assumed "men of taste" would understand that he was mocking only Puritans when he gives smutty examples of women who confuse sexual arousal with religious enthusiasm (pp. 102, 130), or only Catholics when describing their magic tricks and financial scams, but he was as clueless as his narrator if he failed to realize how these and all the other religious practices he skewers with such demonic glee undermine the authority of the Church of England. Whether he was in denial, hypocritical, or an ancient by day, a modern by night "dreaming terrible truths, radical and destructive, about out culture, our reason, and the will of God" (Traugott, 87), Swift has more in common with his narrator than he thinks. Then again, the *Tale* is such a maze of irony, parody, and paradox that it's impossible to say where Swift stands.

Swift exerted better control over the structure. Convinced that modern critics were more interested in tooting their own horns than in making a humble contribution to scholarship, Swift so orders the prelims that the first

thing we read by the narrator is his grandiose "Epistle Dedicatory" to posterity, in which he trumpets the "immortal productions" he and other Grubæan sages have written. This is followed by a preface that focuses not on the topic of the book but on the dire circumstances under which he wrote it, and on his difficulty finding something new to say. (Which is to say, the *Tale* has all the markings of metafiction.) Even the introduction further postpones the topic as the narrator weighs the best platform from which to air his views, gives further praise to his fellow moderns, and indulges in some self-pitying remarks about his rough life. No sooner does he finally begin his tale of the three brothers than he interrupts it for a digression, shuttling back and forth between the tale and other digressions for six sections until he reaches section 10, which is not a continuation of the parable, as the preceding structure would suggest, but yet another digression, which concludes with a shameless invitation to critics to write about this "miraculous treatise," even going so far as to supply "a few innuendos that may be of great assistance to those sublime spirits who shall be appointed to labor in a universal comment upon this wonderful discourse" (120). It has been suggested Swift intended to continue the story of Martin here; see his "Abstract of What Follows after Sect. IX. in the Manuscript" (pp. 262–67), which first appeared in Swift's *Miscellaneous Works* (1720). On the other hand, and more aesthetically appealing, is Levine's suggestion that the structure "breaks down under the pressure of the disordered personality that, as the *Tale* proceeds, escapes from the confinement of the digressions and captures the entire work" (209). The self-absorbed narrator returns to the parable briefly, but has lost interest in it by that point—he's more interested in touting his forthcoming *General History of Ears*—and lamely claims to have lost or mislaid the rest of the parable of the three brothers. In the conclusion, he returns to the true subject of the book, himself, and confesses that during the writing process he was "often under a temptation of being witty upon occasions where I could be neither wise nor sound nor, nor anything to the matter at hand" (136). The form brilliantly suits the matter, which is an exposé of modern learning as neither wise nor sound, merely a platform for hacks to strut their wit—full of sound and fury, but signifying nothing. Also in the conclusion, the narrator informs us, appropriately enough, "I am now trying an experiment

very frequent among modern authors, which is to *write about nothing*" (135, his italics).[107]

The disturbing result is not merely a nettling satire on "the abuses and corruptions in learning and religion" but a bitter indictment of the human race. In the climactic digression on madness, the narrator argues that history is the record of madmen, for if you look at those responsible for "the establishment of new empires by conquest, the advance and progress of new schemes in philosophy, and the contriving as well as the propagating of new religions," each one possessed a "distemper" called "madness or frenzy" (105), which the narrator praises as the key to success.[108] Swift goes beyond his announced intention of satirizing "modern" trends in the 17th century to portray a world that has always operated from the basest motives (greed, egotism, lust, power), and always will. The alleged purpose of satire is to correct faults by ridiculing them, but the despairing view of history that emerges from these frenzied pages suggests that the faults are too deeply ingrained in human nature ever to be corrected, and that humans are immune to satire. "'Tis but a ball bandied to and fro, and every man carries a racket about him to strike it from himself among the rest of the company" (32). In each generation there is a minority with hard-earned knowledge and discernment who can only stand aside and watch the rest of mankind play the fool, at best pursuing "the sublime and refined point of felicity called *the possession of being well deceived*" (112), at worst imposing their distempered visions on others. The members of that even-tempered minority are like the visitors to Bedlam in the digression on madness, viewing with amusement and disgust the world according to Swift.

Swift would have laughed if someone had congratulated him on writing a brilliant, nihilistic avant-garde novel, but only because those terms were not yet used in the modern sense; avant-garde applied only to an army, and the novel was still regarded as trifling entertainment, like the slim book his friend William Congreve wrote while they were both at Trinity College in Dublin.[109] But he conscientiously worked in the novelistic tradition of Petronius, Rabelais, Cervantes, and Dunton, and *A Tale of a Tub* influenced other avant-garde novels, beginning almost immediately with Thomas D'Urfey's *Essay Towards the Theory of the Intelligible World* (which we'll

essay shortly), possibly Bordelon's *Monsieur Oufle*, definitely Sterne's *Tristram Shandy*, Carlyle's *Sartor Resartus* (which adapts the tailor motif), Melville's *Moby-Dick*, Nabokov's *Pale Fire*, Sorrentino's *Mulligan Stew*, and it resembles (if not directly influenced) any number of formally inventive novels published over the last 75 years: Joyce often refers to the *Tale* in *Finnegans Wake*, and clearly modeled the description of Shem the Penman (182–85) on the idea of Swift's ink-stained narrator in his garret spinning out the digression on madness. Frederik Smith calls it "in effect an antinovel" comparable to Beckett's *Watt* or Barth's *Lost in the Funhouse* (125). The locus classicus of the novel of learned wit, the *Tale* is also a metafiction (dramatizing its own composition) and a critifiction (criticizing criticism via fiction), especially the mock-variorum 1710 version. As ludicrous as the narrator's claim may have sounded in 1704 that he was writing a great work that would be embraced by posterity and by "sublime spirits" who would write commentaries upon "this wonderful discourse," he was right, for the critical commentary on *A Tale of a Tub* is now as big as a whale. I have, however, made a momentous discovery about the text that will overturn all previous *Tub*bian criticism, and establish it as the most typical novel in world literature, for there is a certain * * *

letters. (The resemblance to Trotter's *Adventures* is obvious.) In the same sassy spirit, Lindamira calls the first fop to approach her "Philander" because he expresses himself in "abominable, far-fetched metaphors, with incoherent fragments out of plays, novels, and romances" (2). She knights one paralytic beau "Sir Formal Trifle" after a character (she reminds her correspondent) in Thomas Shadwell's 1676 play *The Virtuoso*. "Silvanus" is her nickname for the husband of her BFF Valeria. While 17th-century romanciers and their heroines regarded marriage as the holy grail, the mother of this thoroughly modern girl breezily informs Sir Formal that "few men loved their wives so well as their mistresses, and that marriage quite altered the constitution of their souls, and as saintlike, complaisant, and obliging as they appeared during their courtship, they became tyrants instead of husbands, and did so ill-use their power that they treated their wives like slaves, and had not that tenderness and affection for 'em as might be justly expected" (3). Lindamira occasionally parodies the diction of 17th-century romances for tongue-in-cheek effect, all in an effort, her original editor Thomas Brown suggests, to transport their French tropes to British soil. In his brief preface to the novel, Brown—another of the Grubby "sons of art" thumped in *A Tale of a Tub*—proposes with shaky grammar, "If the histories of foreign amours and scenes laid beyond the seas, where unknown customs bear the greatest figure, have met with the approbation of English readers, 'tis presumed that domestic intrigues, managed according to the humours of the town and the natural temper of the inhabitants of this our island, will be at least equally grateful." Like a teenage girl creating a fashionably retro outfit from her grandmother's ball gown, the presumably female author appropriates the formalities of the French romance for a more relaxed look at modern love.

Or so it seems for the first half-dozen letters. But then Lindamira meets a man she calls "Cleomidon" and her life begins to resemble a 17th-century romance. Visiting her grandmother in the country, she encounters a "rural scene" that "equaled the best descriptions I had ever read on" (7)—in novels, that is—and though she is urged to read Seneca by her grandmother's confidante (whom Lindamira cattily calls Xantippe after Socrates' captious wife), one day

> she found me reading a romance, which I was very intent upon, and being deeply engaged in the unfortunate adventures of a disconsolate lover, I minded her not when she came in but continued my reading, and she, perceiving what my study was, assumed a supercilious look and a contracted brow. "So, Lindamira," said she, "how much you value my advice, that prefers the reading of an idle romance before the precepts of the wise and learned Seneca! Take my word," continued she, raising the tone of her voice: "nothing so much corrupts the minds of young people as the reading of these foolish books that treat of fulsome love and fills their heads full of chimeras." I could not help laughing at my friend for the wrong notions she had taken of the books that so pleasantly had spun out my time, and I very ignorantly began to defend the wit of the ingenious author. (8)

Under the spell of fiction, Lindamira now defends ("ignorantly") the kind of fiction she had mocked back in London, and metafictionally does so in a novel that Xantippe would have dismissed as an "idle romance." *The Adventures of Lindamira* dramatizes the contested status of fiction that novelists, critics, and readers still argued over at the beginning of the 18th century, and for the rest of the century English novelists would continue to juggle older forms and newer ideas as they sought to legitimize this "idle" genre.

As *Lindamira* continues, it backslides further into those older forms. At one point, Lindamira is in a valley "when at a distance I discovered a creature make toward me, who rather flew than went on feet, but so far off I could not well distinguish what it was, that I concluded it was some hobgoblin or some winged monster of the night" (10); "this furioso" turns out to be only Xantippe, but for a moment we feel like we're back in *Orlando furioso*. The epistolary form of the novel gives way to the heroic romance after she meets a young lady from France, and devotes letters 14–17 to "The Adventures of Doralisa and the Pleasant Young Ovid," which reads like an interpolated *histoire* in one of Madame de Scudéry's novels, though mercifully shorter: as Boyce puts it in his introduction, the author scales it down "one inch to Scudéry's yard" (vii). Letter 19 adopts a subplot from her *Cyrus the Great*, and by this point there are so many characters with names such as Alcander, Cleodora, Volusius, Hermilia, and Lyndaraxa

we feel we have left England for the 17th-century French version of ancient Persia. But after various complications the novel concludes in a recognizable London with the genre-requisite wedding. *The Adventures of Lindamira* is a clever, book-smart novel, and "a remarkable demonstration," as Boyce says, "of how something of situation, motivation, and sentiment could be abstracted from the now rather *démodé* French heroic romance and adapted to English middle-class life" (v–vi). "Chronologically, and otherwise," adds McDermott, "*Lindamira* can be regarded as a 'half-way house' between the heroic romance of the seventeenth, and the realistic novel of the eighteenth century" (133).

The 1704 publication of *A Tale of a Tub* left its mark on several novels that appeared later in the same decade, beginning with the first British science-fiction novel of the 18th century.[111] *The Consolidator; or, Memoirs of Sundry Transactions from the World in the Moon* (1705) is the first novel by a businessman born Daniel Foe (1660–1731), who ennobled himself *De*foe shortly before embarking on a prolific writing career. The unnamed narrator begins with an account of how much the Russian tsar learned from his recent tour of Europe and his willingness to apply what he learned to his own country—the same open-minded attitude the narrator hopes his readers will bring to his account of what he learned on the moon. He then describes his time in China, the most technologically advanced people on Earth in his opinion, and of a feather-powered vehicle they use to journey back and forth to the moon called the consolidator. Next, the narrator takes the consolidator to the moon, which is nearly identical to Earth: "all was exactly as it is here, an elementary world people with folks *as like us* as if they were only inhabitants of the same continent, but in a remote climate" (24). The only novelties he finds are a telescope that allows him to view activities back on Earth, a (mood) elevator that encourages fanciful thinking, and a cogitator: a chair that forces a person to think clearly. All of these give him a perspective on events back home, supplemented by his discovery that the moon people have gone through the same tedious tangle of war, political conflict, and religious persecution as Europe had after the restoration of Charles II in 1660. At that point, a third through the novel, the narrator gives the fiction game away:

> And since the allegoric relation may bear great similitude with our European affairs on this side the moon, I shall for the ease of expression, and the better understanding of the reader, frequently call them by the same names our unhappy parties are called by in England, as *Solunnarian* churchmen [Anglicans], and *Crolian* dissenters [Defoe's party], at the same time desiring my reader to observe that he is *always to remember* who it is we are talking of, and that he is *by no means* to understand me of any person, party, people, nation, or place on this side the moon, any expression, circumstance, similitude, or appearance *to the contrary in any wise notwithstanding.* (51–52)

The remaining two-thirds of the novel is a journalistic account of recent history with no attempt to dramatize or fictionalize events. The narrator includes the story of the trouble Defoe experienced after the publication of his ironic essay "The Shortest Way with the Dissenters" (1702), and I suppose some of this is of value to historians of the period, but as fiction it fails. Evidently aware of the lunar journeys of Godwin and Cyrano de Bergerac, Defoe chose not to pursue the imaginative possibilities of an alien culture as they did, or to give his narrator much personality. Except for the few machines mentioned at the beginning, there's little imagination or ingenuity here, which is apparently deliberate. Defoe wanted to keep things simple, for "wiser men than I have taken as unwarrantable flights, and gone a great deal higher than the moon into a strange abyss of dark phenomena, which they neither could make other people understand nor ever rightly understood themselves, witness Malebranche, Mr. Locke, Hobbes, the Honourable Boyle and a great many others besides Messieurs Norris, Asgil, Coward, and the *Tale of a Tub*" (14). He takes another swipe at Swift by accusing his book of displaying "a livid flame called blasphemy, which burnt up all the wit and fancy of the author, and left a strange *stench* behind it that has this unhappy quality in it, that everybody that reads the book *smells the author*, though he be never so far off" (27). That took some nerve, for *The Consolidator* shows almost no "wit and fancy" and leaves behind "a strange stench" of a hack who doesn't know how to convert his material into art. Defoe would learn that lesson later, but his first novel is deservedly forgotten.

The Norris mentioned above is John Norris, author of a philosophical treatise that inspired a more blatant imitation of *A Tale of a Tub* that appeared (per its title page) in "the year one thousand and seven hundred, &c." *An Essay towards the Theory of the Intelligible World* (1708?) is a learned satire on Norris's book of same title (1701–4), pseudonymously written by one Gabriel John, aka dramatist and songwriter Thomas D'Urfey (1653?–1723). He is satirically praised in the *Tale* as "a poet of vast comprehension, an universal genius, and most profound learning" (23); though he was nettled by that reference, and like Defoe considered the *Tale* blasphemous, D'Urfey found the format of Swift's novel to be the perfect vehicle for his own attack on the abuses of learning, especially in philosophy. His author/narrator is a Grub Street hack drawn to the idea of Norris's "intelligible world," the realm of the platonic ideal that Norris insists is as real as the material, "sensible" world. Norris's inspiration, the French philosopher Nicolas Malebranche (1638–1715), appears in Gabriel's garret one day and whisks him off on a fantastic journey to this ideal realm, which Gabriel describes in dizzying detail. For his discovery of this new world, he hopes to be rewarded with the governorship of a country, and limply concludes his rambling book (as does Swift's narrator) by apologizing for all the good stuff he had to leave out, and by offering other books of his for sale, including "two various lections of great importance to history upon the famous Garismachides, *a lost author who is thought to have written on nothing*" (214, his italics).

D'Urfey's "philosophical romance" (210) is a rude attack on philosophical idealism, neoplatonic mysticism, and speculative metaphysics, all of which he dismisses as the results of "visionary imaginations, double-minded sophisms, shadows of echo, and sick men's dreams" (208), stemming from the narcissistic tendency of philosophers to gaze at their own reflections in their watery schemes. The narrator compares Norris's ideal realm to a carnival raree-show (peep show), but given the awfulness of his life—he's old, poor, and nearly blind—he's happy to be suckered in: "And as 'tis sung of the former Narcissus that his *idea* in the *water*, as cruel as he found it, never refused to smile when it saw that he smiled in return, I on the other side, Narcissus *alter*, could not choose but rejoice to see my idea so joyful" (198). Like all metaphysical schemes, all religious fantasies of paradise, this is merely an attempt to

wish oneself somewhere over the rainbow, far away from Kansan reality: a dreary, conflicted world compared to the technicolor spiritual realm dreamed up by quack metaphysicians and other "theorists! foliographers! cosmarchitects!" (148).

D'Urfey represents our messy material world in the form of a chaotic text that visually exceeds Swift's and anticipates Sterne's. Although Gabriel protests near the end that he is not mocking "the professors of title-page learning" (215), his is a wordy billboard claiming to be part 3 of "the archetypally second edition," "designed for forty-nine parts," with the requisite Latin epigraph and an assurance his book is enriched with "strange things not insufferably clever, nor furiously to the purpose." The table of contents runs 11 pages, and previews chapters on "The great use of defamation and of flattery, when dexterously administered. His ill success therein"; "A copy of verses upon I don't know what"; "A section treating of myself, one of the best subjects" (cf. Dunton's *Voyage*); "A section following the former"; and "Of the full moon, intimations, the building of Babel, the will of destiny, and how Oliver Cromwell, in a passion, shot off a gun at the solstice." (A few of the announced chapters never appear.) The entire first *half* of the book consists of preliminaries—a lengthy extract from Norris, testimonies from other authors, a section "Of Prefaces" (not the preface itself, which doesn't appear until page 189), an argument for the importance of this book, and copious samples of Gabriel's writings (including many bawdy poems)—and after he finally takes off on his voyage with Malebranche halfway through the novel, we're treated to more poems, mathematical demonstrations, random chapter titles from unidentified novels, and a page-long gap like those asterisked chasms in *A Tale of a Tub* (except he uses dashes). The text is strewn with Greek and Latin passages, footnotes, marginalia, learned citations, and all the other paraphernalia of scholarship, which must have driven the typesetter mad. A promised index doesn't appear, but we are given 6 pages of facetious errata and second thoughts: instead of calling his book "a satirical fable," as he did on page 1, the author wants to replace that with "an epic poem, or anything else that you shall think better" (224).

Although Gabriel is mostly right that his book contains "flights and metaphors, quaint conceits, grave apothegms, politic sayings, and learned dissertations" (62–63), and though the parodies of metaphysical writings

are well done, D'Urfey doesn't rise to the same level of Swift or Sterne: the *Essay* has all the bells and whistles of their novels, but not their genius and profundity. It is closer to Dunton's *Voyage*, which doesn't detract from its anarchic fun, its pointed criticism of the psychology of metaphysical beliefs, or its contribution to the genre of learned wit. One of Sterne's biographers notes that during a book-hunting expedition, the future author of *Tristram Shandy* "caught sight of two books as mad as any he himself was destined to write": one was Dunton's *Voyage*, and the other D'Urfey's *Essay* (Cross, 1:132). His novel probably did little to cure readers of their metaphysical fancies—such people are immune to irony and reason—but if it inspired one of the greatest novels of world literature, it served a purpose.[112]

Charles Gildon, who got religion after his freethinking, libertine days when he wrote *The Postboy Robbed of His Mail*, published in 1709 the first volume of a bitter, moralistic novel that begins with an "Epistle Nuncupatory to the Author of *A Tale of a Tub*," one of many literary coattails he rides in *The Golden Spy, or a Political Journal of the British Nights Entertainments of War and Peace, and Love and Politics* (1709–10). As in his earlier novel, he banks on the continuing popularity of Marana's *Turkish Spy* as well as on *The Arabian Nights' Entertainment*, which had recently been translated into English. One night, a Londoner discovers that his golden coins can speak, and in his bedroom over the next six nights, his shiny Scheherazades tell him tales of the corrupting influence of money. It's an ingenious concept, and started a century-long trend for what are now called "it-narratives," in which an object or an animal speaks out.[113] But in Gildon's inky hands, his gold turns to dross. The novel is filled with familiar tales of misers and spendthrifts, of women who sell their favors for money, of the dangers of gambling, and the bribery-prone judicial system. The listener is a naïf who is shocked to learn that the great and the virtuous are so money-hungry, but as he admits, such people "have been so often on the stage, and so long the anvil of satire to no purpose, that 'tis hard to produce any new thing on such a subject" (31). There is one clever story involving a gigolo who steals a loose woman's pearls by swallowing them that plays with symbolism equating commodity with excrement and theft with rape. Some are surprisingly lurid and violent, such as one told of a rich

merchant who lusts after an employee's wife: after ruining him by cheating at cards and sending him to the galleys, the merchant repeatedly rapes the wife, sometimes enlisting the help of his servants to hold her down. One night after he has fallen asleep, she cuts his throat with a razor, "and not satisfied with this, she cut off the offending parts . . ." (123). But most of the tales are derivative – there's one on Donna Olympia, the same papal procurtrix Pix nixed – and Gildon is too lazy to orient the tales to the coins' point of view (as Crébillon would do with his sofa). The impression he leaves is that the talking-object concept was just an excuse to unload some of his unpublished work. Money talks, but Gildon fails to cash in on the idea.

In his introduction to a modern facsimile edition of *The Golden Spy*, Malcolm Bosse suggests the 1708 translation of Lesage's *Devil upon Crutches* may have influenced Gildon, but that seems much more applicable to *The New Atalantis* (1709) by Delarivier Manley (1663–1724), one of the three "female wits" (along with Trotter and Pix) who staged their first plays in 1696. She also published two short epistolary novels, but *The New Atalantis* is the one that attracted major attention, including that of the police, who arrested Manley and her publisher for it. Like the semisupernatural observers in Lesage's novel, the goddesses Astrea and Virtue visit the Mediterranean island of Atalantis (England) to see if humankind has improved since the Golden Age, when a disgusted Astrea left Earth for the stars. She and Virtue soon learn things haven't improved as the allegorical figure Lady Intelligence shows and tells the secret lives of the Atalantean upper classes, based so closely on actual figures of Manley's time that the scandalous novel was suppressed shortly after publication.

Beginning at the coast of the island, where Intell (as her name is abbreviated) shows her divine visitors some debauched naval commanders, the party moves inland, eventually arriving at the capital city of Angela (London), where the novel breaks off in the middle of a satiric review of members of the Divan (House of Commons).[114] The bulk of the novel consists of endless episodes of Whigs Behaving Badly: from the standard vices of vanity, ambition, treachery, greed, and gambling addiction, to less-reported ones like alcoholism, bigamy, homosexuality (especially lesbianism), rape, and incest. A few of the episodes are old-fashion *histoires*

in the 20-page range, but most are shorter, scandal-sheet exposés. After many of them, one of the goddesses will draw the obvious moral: "My Lady Intelligence," Astrea says after one of them, "you have shown us in this your relation how foolish a sin is that of covetousness" (210). These platitudes are suspiciously pat; though the author claims to be following in the footsteps of classical satirists like Lucian, Varro, and Juvenal in the "scourging of vice, and exhortation to virtue" (132, dedication to volume 2), Manley implies that such black-and-white distinctions aren't realistic when examining the gray area in which most people conduct their lives. Too often Astrea and Virtue sound like provincial prudes who don't want to acknowledge the complexity of human behavior; their solution to the many cases they witness of the seduction of virgins is to keep them dumb and isolated, and to marry them off as early as possible. They disapprove of any girl who departs from the norm, specifically those "rude of mind, void of languishments and softness, insensible, hoydening, ungainly brisk, robustly gay, excessively masculine," urging their mothers "To watch the ascendancy of their temper and perpetually ply 'em with the antithesis . . ." (150–51). Since Manley is describing herself and her livelier friends, she's either being hypocritical or indulging in Swiftian irony.[115] Probably the latter, for a few pages later, Astrea spots some fun-loving women who "laugh loud and incessantly" and puritanically sniffs, "Sure these seem to unknow that there is a certain portion of misery and disappointments alloted to all men, which one time or other will assuredly overtake 'em. The very consideration is sufficient, in my opinion, to put a damp upon the serenest, much more a tumultuous joy" (153–54). Intell tells her to get real—"That is afflicting themselves unprofitably" (153–54)—then goes on to explain that these hoydens are a "cabal" of lesbians.

Manley's high moral stand is further undercut by her uneven treatment of vice: she focuses only on Whigs, letting most of her fellow Tories off the hook, fudges some facts, and indulges in some score-settling against enemies and catty remarks about other female writers. Late in the novel she even inserts a brief defense of her own scandalous life in the person of Delia (222–28), which certainly doesn't meet the standards of virtue expressed throughout the novel. Significantly, Astrea responds to Delia's

story by saying “I am weary of being entertained with the fopperies of the fair” (228), unwilling to acknowledge moral relativism.

She could be speaking for the reader, for after a while the endless anecdotes become wearying. It doesn’t help that the style has a dated, 17th-century feel to it; Delia notes that as a girl she had to stay with “an old out-of-fashion aunt, full of the heroic stiffness of her own times, [who] would read books of chivalry and romances with her spectacles. This sort of conversation infected me and made me fancy every stranger that I saw, in what habit so ever, some disguised prince or lover” (223–24). Those romances also infected Manley’s style, especially her stagy dialogue. Other 17th-century genres come to mind: although *The New Atalantis* formally resembles *The Devil upon Crutches*, its primary inspiration were Spanish novellas and especially the scandal-novels of Madame d’Aulnoy and other French writers. And as Rachel Carnell points out, the novel’s title evokes “the genre of a dystopian travelogue, in a dark echo of Francis Bacon’s *The New Atlantis*” (168). Manley sounds modern only during some of the sex scenes (that is, the kind of scenes you wouldn’t find in 17th-century romances): one seducer, after sharing his porn collection with his young ward, jumps her and “nailed her down to the bed with kisses” (39). “Warranted by the soft play and touches of a young willing coquet,” another rake “followed her in good earnest and pulled her down by main force upon a bed of greens in an arbor where they were, till he had almost kissed and ruffled her to pieces” (67). The 17th-century tone would be appropriate if Manley were satirizing the 17th-century attitudes of Astrea and Virtue, but mostly it gives a musty odor to the novel. That and the repetitiousness of many of the anecdotes (so many betrayed virgins and corrupt politicians) reduce the appeal of *The New Atalantis* for the modern reader, as does its dated topicality: Ros Ballaster admits in her introduction that Manley’s “scandal fiction had a certain built-in obsolescence in that its political references would become less obvious and retrievable to its readers as time passed” (xix). After the ban on the novel was lifted, *The New Atalantis* did its part to bring down the Whig ministry and continued to scandalize readers for another generation or two, but that built-in obsolescence is what Alexander Pope had in mind when he sarcastically claimed his “Rape of the Lock” would last “As long as *Atalantis* shall be read” (3:165); he knew that his perfect poem would transcend its topical references while hers would

survive only as footnote to his greater achievement. A modern edition was published in 1991, and reprinted as a Penguin classic the following year, but the latter is long out of print and the novel's appeal is largely limited to specialists (mostly women) of the period.

Same goes for *The Adventures of Rivella* (1714). Manley learned that Charles Gildon had begun to write a biography of her, as he had done for her idol Aphra Behn in 1692, so she offered his publisher an autobiography instead. Dashing it off in less than a month to meet the deadline, she hits the highlights of her life from birth up to shortly after the publication of *The New Atalantis*. In a sense, the novella is an expansion of the Delia section in the earlier novel, which covered her early marriage and bigamous second marriage, and in fact at one point the rushed narrator of *Rivella* refers the reader to that book for details rather than recreate the episode for the new one, irreparably damaging the novella's autonomy. Mostly mined these days by specialists for biographical details, *Rivella* does have a few points of interest. Rather than organize it as a straightforward narrative, as most writers in a hurry would have done, Manley decided to complicate matters by pretending the text was originally written in French by the young Chevalier d'Aumont, who heard the story from his English friend Sir Charles Lovemore, an unrequited lover of Rivella since she was a teen, and that the text has now been "translated" into English. By way of these smokescreens, Manley first warns that this is fiction, not strict autobiography, and second pretends to guarantee its validity and authenticity via a male narrator—as though a silly woman could not be trusted to tell the truth.[116] In reality, Manley manipulates her two male "authors" like puppets: the randy young chevalier is excited by Manley's sex scenes in *Atalantis* and figures "if she have but half so much of the practice as the theory in the way of love, she must certainly be a most accomplished person" (45), which is the 50-year-old Manley's way of telling young male readers that she's still got it going on. The older Lovemore, on the other hand, claims to be "an impartial historian, neither blind to Rivella's weaknesses and misfortunes, as being once her lover, nor angry and severe as remembering I could never be beloved; I have joined together the just and the tender, not expatiated with malice upon her faults,

nor yet blindly overlooking them" (74), which appears to guarantee an evenhanded account, which it isn't.

Manley cleverly turns these "faults" to her advantage. Lovemore begins his account with: "I have often heard her say, if she had been a man, she had been without a fault," exposing the double standard by which "what is not a crime in men is scandalous and unpardonable in women" (47). But Manley turns that frown upside down in the novella's jolly closing line when d'Aumont admits "that it would have been a *fault in her not to have been faulty*" (114). A few pages earlier, Lovemore had chastised her for publishing *The New Atalantis* and asks, "Who bid her to write? What good did she do? Could not she sit quiet as well as her neighbours and not meddle herself about what did not concern her?" (109). *The Adventures of Rivella* is a defense of Manley's decision to write and her refusal to "sit quiet." Even though it's a novella for Manley fans only, *Rivella* is a significant declaration of independence for British women writers.

But before such women exchanged their sewing needles for pens, there appeared a novel claiming to be published by "the author of the *New Atalantis*" (per its title page) and attributed to "the worthy author of a *Tale of a Tub*" (per a sarcastic critic). *The Law Is a Bottomless Pit*, better known as *The History of John Bull* (1712), was in fact written by Dr. John Arbuthnot (1667–1735), a founding member of the Scriblerus Club, which included Swift, Pope, John Gay (author of *The Beggar's Opera*), and other enemies of pedantry. Though Manley's *Atalantis* and Swift's *Tale* were among its immediate sources of inspiration, *John Bull* is a coded political allegory in the manner of Barclay's *Argenis*, Wroth's *Urania*, and the royal romances of the Civil War—only funny. Taken straight, it reads like a light-comic business novel in the tradition of Thomas Deloney (see pp. 383–90 of my previous volume). After the death of Lord Strutt, a parson and a lawyer underhandedly settle his estate on his cousin Philip Baboon, who intends to give all his future business to his grandfather, Lewis Baboon. This alarms clothier John Bull and linen-draper Nicholas Frog, who don't want to lose such a profitable account. They decide to sue Lewis, initiating a lawsuit that drags on for years, enriching their lawyers but nearly bankrupting John Bull. He eventually learns that his "extravagant bitch" of a wife is colluding with his lawyer, and that shiftless Frog has stuck naive Bull with most of the legal bills. (As critics have noted, the names Frog and

Bull allude to Aesop's fable "The Frog and Ox," in which a vain amphibian tries to puff himself up to the size of his bovine neighbor.) After his wife dies, Bull marries a more reasonable woman who encourages him to take matters into his own hands, and he eventually settles advantageously out of court with Lewis Baboon. A subplot involves his Scottish sister Peg and the ludicrous preacher she likes, none other than Jack from *A Tale of a Tub*. True to its original title, the novel seems to be an amusing legal satire populated by a cast of colorful English eccentrics.

However, Arbuthnot's shorthand footnotes—e.g., "Late K[ing]. of S[pain]"— reveal "there is a mystery in all this, my friend, a piece of profound policy."[117] What seems to be a local quarrel among businessmen is an elaborate allegory of English history from 1698 and 1712, centered on the War of Spanish Succession. (Lord Strutt = King Charles of Spain, who died in 1700; Philip Baboon = his successor, Philip, Duke of Anjou; Lewis Baboon = Louis XIV of France; John Bull = the English people; Nicholas Frog = the Dutch; their lawyers = military leaders; Bull's first wife = the Godolphin ministry [1702–10] and its Whig supporters; Bull's second wife = the Harley ministry [1710–14] and its Tory supporters, as well as Queen Anne of England: Arbuthnot was her favorite physician.) The allegory is so elaborate and detailed that in Bower and Erickson's scholarly edition of *John Bull*, the 121-page novel is preceded by a 103-page introduction, and followed by 140 pages of annotations in small type. Even though the creative intricacy of the allegory is the work's primary claim to fame—Lord Macaulay called it "the most ingenious and humorous political satire extant in our language"—it has been overlooked as an important contribution to the English comic novel.

Unlike the statelier political allegories of the 17th century, *John Bull* is written in bumptious British prose, rich in idioms, slang, dialect, and funny accents. This may be the first English novel in which a wife calls her husband "honey," the first to use the rude intensifier "bloody," the first in which a protagonist is easily distracted by "a football, or a match at cricket" (109). Listen to the first Mrs. Bull taking the piss out of a minor character named South (= Archduke Charles of Austria, pretender to the Spanish throne):

> A very fine spark, this Esquire South! My husband took him in, a dirty, snotty-nosed boy, it was the business of half the servants to attend him, the rogue did bawl and make such a noise. Sometimes he fell in the fire and burnt his face, sometimes broke his shins clambering over the benches, often pissed a-bed, and always came in so dirty as if he had been dragged through the kennel at boarding school. He lost his money at chuck-farthing, shuffle-cap, and all-fours; sold his books, pawned his linen, which we were always forced to redeem. Then the whole generation of him are so in love with bagpipes and puppet shows; I wish you knew what my husband has paid at the pastry cooks and confectioners for Naples biscuit, tarts, custards, and sweetmeats. (29)

For the historian, the final sentence is a coded reference to "the early and successful years of the war when Emperor Leopold [of Austria] steadfastly refused to consider a French proposal for a negotiated peace under which Charles would take the bulk of the Spanish inheritance if he would concede Naples, Sicily, and Sardinia to Philip of Anjou" (161); but for the literary historian, the passage evokes the comic low road of fiction some English novelists had been traveling ever since William Baldwin's *Beware the Cat* (1553). The comic style and Menippean form give the Arbuthnot the freedom to refer to the Church of England, for example, as "a troublesome fiddle-faddle old woman" (38) and to reduce the leading kings and statesmen of the day to cutthroat businessmen. As in Manley's scurrilous satires, "the secret springs of great actions" (93) originate in the self-serving actions of scoundrels. The novel purports to be the work of a proud graduate of the "University of Grub Street" named Sir Humphrey Polesworth, which enables Arbuthnot to make Swiftian swipes at historiography—Polesworth was partly based on legal historian Sir Humphrey Mackworth—and at literary sacred cows: Polesworth is a great admirer of *The Pilgrim's Progress* (93), but earlier he unwittingly brackets it with subliterary trash when he informs the reader that the second Mrs. Bull "would not allow her maids and apprentices the benefit of John Bunyan, the *London Apprentice*, or the *Seven Champions*" (63).[118]

Although Arbuthnot didn't invent John Bull, he popularized the British icon—"ruddy and plump, with a pair of cheeks like a trumpeter" (49–50)—

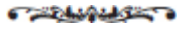
who is introduced as "an honest, plain-dealing fellow, choleric, bold, and of a very unconstant temper, . . . very apt to quarrel with his best friends, especially if they pretended to govern him: If you flattered him, you might lead him like a child. John's temper depended very much upon the air; his spirits rose and fell with the weather-glass. John was quick, and understood his business very well, but no man alive was more careless in looking into his accounts, or more cheated by partners, apprentices, and servants" (9). Over the course of the novel, however, John learns to become more responsible and mature, just as (Arbuthnot implies) the English nation learned how to govern itself better at the end of this tumultuous period. Like all political satires, *John Bull* is so dependent on period detail that a full appreciation of its merits is attainable only by someone willing do some homework, but any reader can appreciate its colorful characters and vigorous, demotic prose style.

A different kind of political allegory, tragic rather than comic, appeared in 1716 under the title *Irish Tales*, a novella by the otherwise unknown Sarah Butler, reportedly dead when it was published.[119] The title is misleading, for the novel is a continuous narrative, not a collection of tales; Butler herself calls it a "novel" twice in her preface. Set in the early 11th century, it dramatizes the Irish reaction to the Viking occupation and the compromises some made with the foreigners. The politically savvy reader of 1716 would have intuited the parallel with the situation in Ireland: after 1691, the Catholic Irish had to knuckle under to the "heretic" English Protestants just as they had to the heathen Vikings in the Middle Ages; in both eras, some Irish collaborated with the enemy while others resisted. In *Irish Tales*, the father of a beautiful woman named Dooneflaith seems to be willing to sacrifice her to the lust of the occupying Viking ruler Turgesius, which infuriates her ardent admirer Murchoe, son of the Irish resistance leader Brian Boru. Both Dooneflaith and Murchoe are wracked by guilt over the compromises they make to stay together, especially Murchoe, who forgoes several opportunities to kill Turgesius and liberate his country because he'd probably die in the effort: he'd rather be a live lover than a dead hero.

The centerpiece of the novella is a sexually charged undercover mission in which 15 beautiful Irish virgins are forced to service the lusts of Tugesius

and other Danish occupiers. But the lasses are actually lads, each dressed in "female apparel, and each a short sword under his gown" (69). Dooneflaith, the only biological female among them, is encouraged by her father (not the collaborator he seemed to be) to penetrate the king before he does her: "strike home, my girl, and dip thy dagger to the hilt, then let him take his fill of love, caress and court thee then" (67). The planned orgy turns into an orgy of death as "the blood of the Danes, with that of the grape, promiscuously mingled" (72), followed by a larger conflict that enables the Irish to take back their country. Butler doesn't allow her virginal heroine to participate in the blood orgy—her partner for the night is led off and drowned later—nor does she allow her to marry Murchoe. Both are kept apart by their feuding fathers, suggesting parental tyrants are as bad as foreign ones, and while there's a happy ending for Ireland, there isn't one for them.

Unlike the author of the earlier novel *Vertue Rewarded*, which also dealt with the English occupation of Ireland in the 1690s, Butler doesn't compromise with characters' names, giving us authentic monikers such as Dooneflaith, Maolseachelvin, and Huaghaire Mac-Duniling Mac-Tuatil (all taken from original sources: Butler did her homework). The prose blends the poetic style of old Irish tales with 17th-century heroic romance, and the dialogue of the lovers often scans as blank verse. The novella is wryly subtitled "Instructive Histories for the Happy Conduct of Life," the implications being (a) that Erin's children should be prepared to sacrifice personal desires to national interests, and (b) that Irish readers can take comfort in these tales until the happy day when the English are expelled, just as the Vikings eventually were. Which is to say, *Irish Tales* has not yet outlived its original purpose.



The Life and Strange Surprizing Adventures of Robinson Crusoe of York, Mariner (1719) is not the first novel, as sometimes claimed, nor the first desert-island novel, the first realistic novel, the first middle-class novel, the first capitalist novel, nor the first novel to assert "the primacy of individual experience" (Watt, 15). It is, however, the first major novel of 18th-century English literature, largely because Defoe devised a winning combination of

those elements and geared them to the tastes of the growing reading public. Its extraordinary success is due not to its originality but to its accessibility and compelling immediacy.

There had been desert-island novels as far back as Ibn Tufayl's 12th-century *Hayy ibn Yaqzan* (see pp. 489–91 of my previous volume), but only a few middle-class readers encountered the English translations of it that began to appear in the 1670s (though Defoe was evidently one of them). Only the literati read it, or Godwin's *Man in the Moon*—which, you'll recall, begins with an inventive European stranded on an island with a black servant—or Neville's *Isle of Pines*, Grimmelshausen's *Continuation*, or a Dutch novel by Hendrik Smeeks entitled *The Mighty Kingdom of Krinke Kesmes* (1708).[120] Some Londoners, including Defoe, would have read Richard Steele's popular article on the Scotsman Alexander Selkirk in the 3 December 1714 issue of *The Englishman*, about a man who ran away to sea to avoid a court summons (for indecent behavior in a church!) and was left behind on an island west of Chile for five years. And those with a good memory (again probably including Defoe) may have recalled a pamphlet published in 1689 entitled *A Relation of the Great Suffering and Strange Adventures of Henry Pitman*, a nonfiction account of an Englishman marooned on a Caribbean island that has a remarkable number of similarities to Robinson Crusoe's adventures.[121] Defoe went further than any of these authors in *imagining* how a man might survive on a deserted island, but the basic idea was an old one.

Similarly, there are realistic novels stretching back to the crime novels of the ancient Greeks, Petronius's *Satyricon*, all the way back to the ancient Egyptian business-traveler novel *The Report of Wenamun*. Deloney wrote middle-class capitalist success stories in the 1590s, and we've seen many other novels during this early modern period dealing with characters from the middle classes. The "primacy of individual experience" had been petulantly asserted as early as Boccaccio's *Elegy of Lady Fiammetta* (c. 1344), if not earlier, and was a growing trend in novels from the Renaissance onward, up to an intensely self-directed novel published anonymously in 1708 as *An Account of Some Remarkable Passages in the Life of a Private Gentleman*.[122] Defoe didn't invent any of this; pushing 60 after nearly 30 years in the writing business, what he did was figure out a

way to repackage all these trends and genres in a form that would appeal to readers high and low.

The novel's formal design is crude but efficient, like the chair Crusoe makes for himself on his island. The first 30 pages (in the Norton Critical Edition I'll be citing) deals with his life before he was marooned on an island in the Caribbean, and the last 30 pages begin with the arrival of the English ship that will take him back to Europe. Rousseau called these opening and closing sections "rigmarole" and wanted his Emile to study only the middle 160 pages, and indeed most readers soon forget the frame. (When I returned to it after 35 years for the purpose of this book, I couldn't remember how it began and only vaguely recalled a tense winter scene at the end.) At the very center of the novel, Crusoe spots the footprint on the sand, just at the point when he and the novel had become too comfortable. Also framing the novel are biblical allusions that underscore the spiritual dimension of Crusoe's adventure: at the beginning there are a few references to the parable of the prodigal son, and near the end, safely back in Europe and now rich, Crusoe comments, "that the latter end of Job was better than the beginning" (205). Pirates and wild animals play important roles at the beginning and the end, and those neglected bookends help us decide how we should interpret Defoe's novel: is it a celebration of self-reliance, capitalism, and middle-class morality, or a condemnation?

For millions of readers for nearly three centuries, the answer was obvious: "Robinson Crusoe, the first capitalist hero," as novelist Carlos Fuentes calls him, "is a self-made man who accepts objective reality and then fashions it to his needs through the work ethic, common sense, resilience, technology, and, if need be, racism and imperialism."[123] He succeeds against great odds—though unlike Selkirk and other predecessors, he had the advantage of a ship's resources—and for better or for worse exemplifies "the whole Anglo-Saxon spirit," as James Joyce noted: "the manly independence; the unconscious cruelty; the persistence; the slow yet efficient intelligence; the sexual apathy; the practical, well-balanced religiousness; the calculating taciturnity."[124] Not only does Crusoe triumph over adversity on his island, but he returns to Europe to find that his earlier business ventures have made him rich. But there are some ugly facets of Crusoe's tale, as Fuentes, Joyce, and many other readers have noted, despite Defoe's efforts to position it as

a Christian-redemption/capitalist-success story. *Robinson Crusoe* is a telling example of what D. H. Lawrence warned us about: "The artist usually sets out—or used to—to point a moral and adorn a tale. The tale, however, points the other way, as a rule. Two blankly opposing morals, the artist's and the tale's. Never trust the artist. Trust the tale" (2).

The "opposing morals" are more obvious to modern readers than to Defoe's original audience or to the generations of boys who read the novel thereafter. (Throughout the 19th century, *Robinson Crusoe* was considered primarily a YA novel, and to this day the majority of critics who have written on it are men.) First there is the titanic egotism. Defoe could have narrated the novel in the third-person, but he chose the first-person for good reason, though one unintentional drawback is that it highlights his protagonist's selfishness. You'll notice young Bob Crusoe (as he's first called) doesn't give his father a name or quote him directly: he keeps him vague, partly to blend him with his heavenly father—several times Defoe collates the two, as in "God's blessings, or my father's" and "my duty to God and my father" (7)—but partly to downplay any emotional ties to his father. (In marked contrast, Crusoe is moved by the effusive affection Friday shows for his father [172], witnessing emotions he evidently never felt for his own.) After Bob runs away to sea and is captured and enslaved, he befriends a Moor, only to throw him into the sea when he escapes, threatening to shoot him when the Moor reminds him of their friendship. Bob then adopts a younger Moor named Yury, who serves him selflessly until a ship captain offers to buy him; Bob hesitates, but sells him out for 60 pieces of eight—"twice Judas's figure," as Watts notes (69). Similarly at the end, Crusoe displays generosity only toward his *business* partners, no one else; we hear nothing about his selfless servant Friday after a wolf attack (during which Friday acts completely out of character), and then Defoe gives us this concise masterpiece of egotistic self-absorption: "In the meantime, I in part settled myself here [in England]; for first of all I married, and that not either to my disadvantage or dissatisfaction, and had three children, two sons and one daughter. But my wife dying, and my nephew coming home with good success from a voyage to Spain, my inclination to go abroad and his importunity prevailed and engaged me to go in his ship as a private trader to the East Indies. This was in the year 1694" (219). No names, no details (except for the date of *his* next business

venture), no further mention of his children, just an emotionless sentence on his domestic life, followed by a preview of his further adventures to whet customers's appetite for a sequel. And where does he get off calling himself (on the title page) a "mariner"?

The opening section also establishes Crusoe's xenophobia and paranoia. He and Xury sail down the coast of Africa "where whole nations of Negroes were sure to surround us with their canoes and destroy us, where we could never once go on shore but we should be devoured by savage beasts, or more merciless savages of humankind" (19), but just the opposite happens. They cowardly shoot a *sleeping* lion, and the natives they meet are open-handed and furnish them with food and water. But Crusoe forgets all about the nonthreatening beasts and "friendly Negroes" (25) after he is shipwrecked. Building himself a camouflaged fort, a heavily armed Crusoe hunkers down in it like a paranoid survivalist in a bomb shelter, even "though, as it appeared afterward, there was no need of all this caution from the enemies that I apprehended danger from" (45). The most "dangerous" animal on his island is a goat, and the occasional visiting Indians eat only their prisoners of war, yet he spends much of his time quaking in irrational fear and anxiety. When he spots that first footprint, he reacts not with joy in anticipation of meeting another human after a dozen years of solitude, but with terror: "I came home to my fortification not feeling, as we say, the ground I went on, but terrified to the last degree, looking behind me at every two or three steps, mistaking every bush and tree, and fancying every stump at a distance to be a man" (112). But years pass before anyone shows up. The saddest example of his selfish, suspicious nature occurs when Friday, after years of selfless service, expresses a desire to visit home:

> I made no doubt but that if Friday could get back to his own nation again, he would not only forget all his religion, but all his obligation to me, and would be forward enough to give his countrymen an account of me and come back with perhaps a hundred or two of them and make a feast upon me, at which he might be as merry as he used to be with those of his enemies when they were taken in war.
>
> But I wronged the poor honest creature very much, for which I was very sorry afterwards. However, as my jealousy [suspicion] increased,

> and held me some weeks, I was a little more circumspect, and not so familiar and kind to him as before. (162)

Though Crusoe criticizes Spaniards for their the harsh treatment of the natives, and though he experiences moments of multicultural relativism, he too is part of the European invasion and colonization of the Americas. Shortly after arriving, "I shot at a great bird which I saw sitting upon a tree on the side of a great wood; I believe it was the first gun that had been fired there since the creation of the world" (40), which for him is merely a noteworthy datum, but which for us has an ominous ring. Instead of adapting to his island habitat, he imposes European systems on it—he of course converts Friday to Christianity, and gives him that European name without even asking his real one—and on the final page of the novel Crusoe reports what he saw and heard when he returned to his colony, a horror story of escalating violence between the Europeans he left behind and the neighboring Caribbeans—horrible to the modern reader, that is. To him, it's merely the cost of doing business as he reports his findings with all the objectivity of an accountant.

Crusoe's business mentality is obvious from the start as he itemizes the return on his initial investment (14), and from his precise date-keeping and accounting on the island ("we had gotten as much land cured and trimmed as we sowed 22 bushels of barley on and 16 jars of rice . . ." [179]). This bookeeping mentality looks a little ludicrous when he creates a chart "to set the good against the evil, that I might have something to distinguish my case from worse, and I started it very impartially, like Debtor and Creditor, the comforts I enjoyed against the miseries I suffered" (49), and later, a little scary: after he and a small band repel some unauthorized visitors, he even totes up a body-count chart (171). There's a well-known passage early in the novel when the shipwrecked Crusoe realizes how worthless his gold coins are: "I smiled to myself at the sight of this money. O drug! said I aloud, what art thou good for? . . . I have no manner of use for thee, e'en remain where thou art and go to the bottom as a creature whose life is not worth saving." But his capitalist instincts immediately kick in: "However, upon second thoughts, I took it away . . ." (43), and he still possesses the "drug" 28 years later when he is rescued. Upon returning to Europe, Crusoe overwhelms the reader with financial details of his investments, and the

climax of the novel occurs not when he is reunited with his family and friends, or when he marries, but at his realization of how rich he is: “In a word, I turned pale and grew sick, and had not the old man run and fetched me a cordial, I believe the sudden surprise of joy had overset nature and I had died upon the spot” (205). That’s the same page on which Crusoe compares himself to Job, and would have made a fitting conclusion. Yet the novel continues for 15 increasingly grim pages, during which Crusoe is menaced by an army of wolves, and ends with references to battles, storms, famine, and destruction. Nor would Crusoe have become this rich had he stayed home and not committed the “original sin” (141) of defying his earthly and heavenly fathers by running off to sea, which seems to negate the religious message of the novel. Disobedience is the key to his success. If Defoe *wanted* to expose the incompatibility of capitalism and Christian principles, he couldn’t have managed it better.

Emotionless, paranoid, egocentric, imperialistic, racist, profit-minded (not to mention a cat-killer), Robinson Crusoe of York would be a divisive figure if running for office today. Conservative Republicans would idolize him, liberal Democrats would abhor him. (To adapt Lawrence’s terms, the artist is a religious Republican, the tale a secular Democrat.) But in Defoe’s time, *Robinson Crusoe* gave middle-class readers a hero of their own who shared their values, worshiped the same god, spoke their language—plain English prose, not la-di-da literary language—voiced their suspicion of strangers, and validated their conviction that hard work pays off, so they rewarded him by turning it into a best-seller.

Like few literary artists but most commercial writers, Defoe responded to the book’s surprising success by rushing out a sequel. A mere four months after *Robinson Crusoe* was published, *The Farther Adventures of Robinson Crusoe* appeared. Overlapping with the end of the first novel, Crusoe tells a little more about his marriage, then returns with Friday to finish civilizing his island (including forcing cohabiting couples to marry), but shortly afterward he loses Friday during a cannibal attack. Crusoe’s lack of emotion at his longtime companion’s death has drawn much criticism—from Charles Dickens, for one—but it is perfectly consistent with his heartless character, since presumably Friday didn’t owe him money. Crusoe then travels to Madagascar, to southeast Asia and China, and eventually to Russia before returning to England at age 73. But this part has never been very popular,

nor has the other sequel Defoe published a year later, *Serious Reflections of Robinson Crusoe*, a series of moral essays. It was not Crusoe or his reflections that appealed to readers but his early experiences on the island, brilliantly conceived by Defoe and described in such convincing detail that it creates a kind of virtual reality where readers can play along, imagining themselves in his place. And if certain readers want to linger on Crusoe's remark that "Friday and I became more intimately acquainted" (160), what happens on the island stays on the island.[125]

The success of *Robinson Crusoe* gave Defoe a burst of literary energy that sustained him for six more novels over the next four years. Three of the them are minor (though as good if not better than most novels published in the early 1720s): *Memoirs of a Cavalier* (1720) records the exploits of an Englishman who fought on the Swedish side during the Thirty Years' War and then for the royalists during the English Civil War. *Captain Singleton* (also 1720) is about an Englishman who reluctantly becomes a pirate, though the novel focuses more on the economics of piracy than on its buccaneering side. (Is it possible to writing a dull novel about pirates?) *Colonel Jack* (1722) is a rags-to-riches story partially set in Virginia about a young Englishman sold into slavery who rises to overseer, returns to England as a merchant, "married four wives, and five of them proved whores" (as the title page riddles us), entered military service, and is now writing his memoirs in the hope of dying a gentleman. All are realistic, plainly told novels; no more fanciful journeys to the moon for Defoe.[126]

After imagining himself as a castaway, Defoe in his next major novel imagined himself as a woman cast away in London, and the result is another story of an egotistic capitalist, equally resourceful and repulsive. *Moll Flanders* (1722) feigns to be the autobiography of a woman abandoned at birth by her criminal mother, written in 1683 when Mrs. Flanders is nearly 70.[127] As with *Robinson Crusoe*, the "spiritual autobiography" provides the basic framework, for Moll eventually repents of her sinful life, which she describes as "a horrid complication of wickedness, whoredom, adultery, incest, lying, theft, and in a word, everything but murder and treason . . . from the age of eighteen or thereabouts to threescore" (218). But Defoe also draws upon the picaresque genre for the first half of the novel, as Moll faces one obstacle after another

in her quest for bourgeois gentility, and then the criminal autobiography for the second half, after Moll loses her fifth husband and, realizing at age 50 she can no longer trade on her looks, decides to turn thief. Like other authors in this genre (Moll refers to Mary Frith on p. 157), she offers her story as a cautionary tale, and even taunts those readers who read her book for the sensational parts and not for the spiritual lessons: "It would be a severe satire on such [readers] to say they do not relish the repentance as much as they do the crime" (228). Defoe knew his audience.

Like Crusoe, Moll displays her capitalist instincts early: insisting she wants to be a "gentlewoman" even before she understands the term, she learns she can achieve that goal quicker from coitus than from her needlework when she's given five guineas for making out with the elder brother in the home she's staying at.[128] Though already attracted to him, she becomes "more confounded with the money than I was before with the love" (20), and continues renting her body to him for handsome tips until she's forced to marry his younger brother, the first of her quasi incestuous relationships. Whatever sympathy the reader has for her up to this point should evaporate when "Betty" (as the brothers call her) gives this heartless summary of her first marriage, which recalls Crusoe's curt account of his:

> It concerns the story in hand very little to enter into the farther particulars of the family, or of myself, for the five years that I lived with this husband; only to observe I had two children by him, and that at the end of five years he died. He had been really a very good husband to me, and we lived very agreeably together, but as he had not received much from them [his family], and had in the little time he lived acquired no great matters, so my circumstances were not great; nor was I much mended [financially improved] by the match. Indeed I had preserved the elder brother's bonds to me to pay me 500 *l.* which he offered me for my consent to marry his brother; and this, with what I had saved of the money he formerly gave me [for sex], and about as much more by my husband, left me a widow with about 1200 *l.* in my pocket.[129]
>
> My two children were indeed taken happily off my hands by my husband's father and mother, and that by the way was all they got by Mrs. Betty. (46–47).

With all the emotion of an accountant preparing a profit/loss statement, Moll focuses solely on the financials of her first marriage, and like a businessperson relieved to get out of a cumbersome lease, she "happily" unloads the unnamed, unwanted kids on her in-laws (a common practice back then in situations like this, but still). This businesslike attitude characterizes the rest of her relationships—four more marriages plus a six-year affair, resulting in a dozen children who, with one exception, are nameless and abandoned—and is carried over to her criminal career. She soon makes enough as a thief to retire early, but she's addicted to what Crusoe called the drug: "as poverty brought me into the mire, avarice kept me in" (158). It might be going too alliteratively far to mock Moll as a monster of middle-class materialism, but I'll leave that hanging out there.

This is not the story of an independent woman trying to make her way in a man's world by any means necessary, but of a greedy egotist who preys on society. Defoe attempts to turn the reader against Moll with his choices of her earliest crimes: the first is the theft of a *child*'s necklace, and Moll admits she was tempted to kill "the child in the dark alley that it might not cry" (151: not the only time she refers to a child as "it"). Shortly after this, she hears of a fire in her neighborhood and rushes to join the looters, pretending to help but making off with a bundle she later discovers consists of family heirlooms. At first, she reacts as any moral person would: "it really touched me to the very soul when I looked into this treasure to think of the poor disconsolate gentlewoman who had lost so much by the fire besides; . . . I confess the inhumanity of this action moved me very much and made me relent exceedingly, and tears stood in my eyes upon that subject. But with all my sense of its being cruel and inhuman, I could never find in my heart to make any restitution. The reflection wore off, and I began quickly to forget the circumstances that attended the taking them" (161). That should expunge any remaining sympathy the reader has for this heartless scum, yet I find there are readers and critics who describe Moll as "marvellous" and admire "her resilience and courage and generosity," which I find both inexplicable and morally reprehensible.[130] Though Moll claims to be giving "an account of what was, not of what ought or ought not to be" (78), it's obvious she's lying to us and suppressing evidence. She never even tells us her real name: "Moll Flanders" is an alias. When she

gives a résumé of her life midway through the novel, she lets slip she has "lain with thirteen men" (142), though she has accounted for only five of them so far. (And you can bet she wasn't giving it away.) After a while, her claims that "women were the most unhappy creatures in the world" (55) and that "if a woman has no friend to communicate her affairs to, and to advise and assist her, 'tis ten to one but she is undone" (101) begin to ring hollow. Peddle your story somewhere else, sister.[131]

Compared stylistically to the pungent criminal novels of the 17th century on which Defoe modeled his, *Moll Flanders* is rather bland and prolix. (Most of those earlier fictions are taut novellas; *Moll Flanders* rambles on for 268 pages.) Of course, Moll doesn't pretend to be a skilled writer, and in the preface her "editor" admits "the original of this story is put into new words, and the style of the famous lady we here speak of is a little altered, particularly she is made to tell her own tale in modester words than she told it at first" (3), but that doesn't relieve the occasional tedium. This may also be due to Defoe's ambition to improve upon naive productions like *Mary Frith* and *The Counterfeit Lady Revealed*; as Richetti notes, "What distinguishes *Moll Flanders* from mere criminal biography of the period and what makes the book a novel in the full modern sense of the term is its tendency towards extended meditation on the nature of action rather than the mere description of the action itself" *(Defoe's Narratives*, 105). But Moll's meditations often amount to the-devil-made-me-do-it evasions (literally: see p. 151) and some uneasiness after certain crimes that she might be caught, or commonplaces such as "'tis evident to me that when once we are hardened in crime, no fear can affect it, no example give us any warning" (172). And of course the moral lessons she derives from her activities are clichéd and hypocritical.

For a novel lauded as a breakthrough in realism, it's rather vague and sketchy, unlike the better criminal novels like *The London Jilt*: few characters are named, and there are no references to current events: Moll is in London during both the Great Plague of 1665 and the Great Fire of 1666, yet doesn't say a word about either. (In *A Journal of the Plague Year*, which Defoe wrote around the same time, the narrator notes that most of the thieves who took advantage of the calamity were women.) Moll mentions some London street names, but doesn't describe any settings in any detail;

la, when she's thrown into Newgate Prison, which screams out for color commentary, she claims "no colors can represent the place to the life" (215).[132] The novel is not so much realistic as frank about certain topics not often treated in fiction before, such as abortion and syphilis. As Dorothy Van Ghent points out, there are plenty of references to *things* (especially stolen goods), but the novel is not "a world rich in physical, sensuous textures—in images for the eye or for the tactile sense or for the tongue or the ear or for the sense of temperature or the sense of pressure. It is extraordinarily barren of such images" (49–50). On the one hand, this is appropriate for a narrator as self-centered as Moll; as E. M. Forster writes, "She fills the book that bears her name, or rather stands alone in it, like a tree in a park, so that we can see her from every aspect and are not bothered by rival growths" (88). The isolated Robinson Crusoe can be forgiven his self-absorption, but Moll's is more damning. And I don't know where *Moll Flanders* got its ribald reputation; Moll skips over the details of her sexual encounters and dwells only on the money she made from them: "as for the gold, I spent whole hours looking upon it. I told [counted] the guineas over and over a thousand times a day" (21–22). Defoe forces us to spend 268 pages inside the head of a self-pitying, self-centered, morally bankrupt woman who has no problem stealing from kids and rolling drunks to fulfill her childhood dream of becoming a "gentlewoman," and who then has the gall to presume her melodramatic jailhouse act of contrition cancels out the misery she inflicted on countless good, law-abiding people. Her financial success at the end of the novel leaves a bad taste in the mouth, "a severe satire" on the Christian idea of repentance. The entire novel feels like one of her scams.

Much more impressive is the novel Defoe published three months later, *A Journal of the Plague Year* (1722), the story of an ordinary man trying to comprehend an extraordinary event. It may be the earliest example of what critics today call the "documentary novel," in which the writer sticks much closer to facts than the author of a historical novel would. While Defoe gives a fairly accurate account of the bubonic plague that swept through London and environs in 1665 (when he was five), he filters it through the conflicted sensibility of a saddler identified at the end only as "H. F.," probably after Henry Foe, an uncle who lived through the plague. Written

some years after the event, the novel is as much about him as the plague, dramatizing a personal crisis by way of a public crisis.

H. F. begins by describing the arrival of the plague in the stunned but stoic manner of Raymond Burr in *Godzilla*, superbly capturing the uncertainty and dread felt by Londoners as the epidemic seeps into the suburbs and creeps eastward into the city. For a reader today, it evokes not only sci-fi movies but the beginning of the AIDS epidemic in the 1980s.[133] The narrator tries to stick to facts and figures as he describes the devastating toll of the epidemic, but it becomes apparent that for him the calamity is a crisis of faith, both in his government and in his god. A good citizen not used to questioning authority, he unctuously praises the Lord Mayor, magistrates, and aldermen for their handling of the disaster, but timidly registers his doubts about the wisdom of certain policies, especially boarding up houses if only one person within was diagnosed as infected, which often caused all members of the house to succumb to the disease. He notes the king and court abandoned the city early on, which is understandable, but he can't help but notice "really the court concerned themselves so little, and that little they did was of so small import, that I do not see it of much moment to mention any part of it here" (234). He bends over backward to excuse the government's ineffective responses to the crisis, too respectful of authority to criticize them: of the house-shutting measure (which he obsesses over), he lets them off the hook in their own officialese: "but it was authorized by a law, it had the public good in view as the end chiefly aimed at, and all the private injuries that were done by the putting it in execution must be put to the account of the public benefit" (158). H. F. knows the authorities made mistakes and the king showed a lack of leadership, but he's the type of citizen who considers it unpatriotic to say so—and thus the type of citizen who allows those authorities to remain in power.

He also lets his god off the hook. H. F. is one of those religious types who regard a natural disaster as an act of divine punishment—verified by his reading of the 91st Psalm—and though he occasionally wonders why a lot of good people and innocent children were punished as well, he quickly suppresses such thoughts. He peppers his text with Old Testament examples of YHWH's taste for revenge, and defends his religious convictions in one

lively scene when he confronts “a dreadful set of fellows” in a tavern who mock him with “hellish abominable raillery” for believing his god would inflict “such a desolating stroke” on his people (65–66). Yet throughout the novel H. F. waffles between supernatural and natural explanations for the plague; though unfamiliar with epidemiology and the true cause of the epidemic (fleas on diseased rats off ships from Holland), he keeps leaning toward realistic explanations, only to be yanked back by his religious belief in divine vengeance, tying himself in knots as he tries to reconcile empirical with theological causes. “I would be far from lessening the awe of the judgments of God, and the reverence of his providence which ought always to be on our minds on such occasions as these . . .” he begins one particularly tortuous passage, “But when I am speaking of the plague as a distemper arising from natural causes, we must consider it as it was really propagated by natural means . . .” (193–94). Behind the curve on scientific knowledge—H. F. wrongly claims “we had no microscopes at that time” (203)—he is torn between a medieval and a modern worldview. In the end he retreats to the medieval and actually praises his god for lifting the plague in late 1665, which is like thanking a burglar for eventually leaving after breaking into your home, killing some family members, and making off with most of your stuff. Similarly, H. F.’s fellow Londoners have learned nothing from the experience and revert to their old habits afterward, including “all manner of wickedness” (248).

The *Journal* can be read as a study of how a patriotic, godfearing citizen reacts when his faith in both secular and divine authority is shaken. While trying to separate rumors from facts and remain objective, H. F. can’t help but register the subjective effect this calamity is having on him. After describing a frantic, “nearly naked” man who had “come out into the open street, run dancing and singing and making a thousand antic gestures, with five or six women and children running after him, crying and calling upon him for the Lord’s sake to come back,” H. F. adds, “This was a most grievous and afflicting thing *to me*, who saw it all from my own windows” (172, my italics). He almost gives in to despair, and at one point wonders “after I have mentioned these things, what can be added more?” (177), but he perseveres for 70 more pages (admittedly a little repetitious) and survives the plague with his uncritical beliefs intact. I doubt Defoe meant us to question the validity of those beliefs—he had his patriotic, superstitious

side, and was more concerned with warning Londoners how to react to an imminent plague brewing in Marseilles since 1720—but this is another instance where we need to trust the tale rather than the author. And what a tale it is: the apocalyptic atmosphere, the horrific details, the historical accuracy, the anecdotes about how people reacted to the disaster—*this* is Defoe's real breakthrough in realism, and it would be a long time before any other English novelist would dare describe life this close to the bone.

Like the protagonists of Defoe's other novels, H. F. has a self-destructive streak: he remains in London even though he admits he should have left at the beginning of the plague, just as Moll Flanders tempts fate by remaining a crook after she's made enough to retire; Crusoe confesses he is powerless to resist the urge "that hurries us on to be the instruments of our own destruction" (12), and feels he "was born to be my own destroyer" (31). No Defoe character better exemplifies this self-destructive tendency than the protagonist of his last major novel, *Roxana, the Fortunate Mistress* (1724). He may have written this in response to the swelling tide of female novelists in the early 1720s (which will crash over us shortly): Eliza Haywood's *Love in Excess* was published the same year as *Robinson Crusoe* and initially was just as popular, and Defoe may have taken his title from her 1723 novel *Idalia, or The Unfortunate Mistress*.[134] If so, I can't imagine what female readers made of Defoe's dark, histrionic tale, for Roxana triumphs over adversity, becomes rich beyond the dreams of avarice, is loved by several decent men, marries the most decent of them, and is made a countess; yet she regards all this as a tragedy.

Like "Moll Flanders," "Roxana" is an alias adopted later in life by a French girl taken to England in 1683 by her father, who marries her at the age of 15 to a London brewer. A brainless incompetent who allows his business to fail, he walks out on his wife after eight years and five children, reducing her to penury. Forced by circumstances to abandon her children, Roxana and her devoted maid Amy are rescued from starvation by their landlord, a prosperous jeweler who helps the beautiful 23-year-old get back on her feet. Worldly Amy informs her fortunate mistress that the jeweler will expect sexual favors in return, and even though he's not a vicious ogre but a handsome man who falls in love with her, and even though Roxana has come to love him as well, as soon as she has sex with him, she flips out

—or so it seems, for all her subsequent actions are so neurotic that the reader has to agree with her later self-diagnosis that she is "as truly crazed and distracted . . . as most of the people in Bedlam" (234). For all practical purposes a single woman, as Amy and the jeweler point out—he's married but separated—Roxana is so mindlessly wedded to "the laws both of God and our country" (43) that she suddenly considers herself a "whore." There's nothing in her previous background to account for such a violent reaction, no convent education or excessive religiosity; she describes her younger self as quick, smart, bold, satirical, confident, and happy. The first indication she has snapped is her treatment of Amy (who deserves an award for best supporting actress in this soap opera): one night, while the jeweler is waiting in bed for Roxana, she strips Amy, pushes her at him, and watches them have sex: "as I thought myself a whore, I cannot say but that it was something designed in my thoughts that my maid should be a whore too, and should not reproach me with it" (47). Invoking satanic imagery, Roxana now regards herself as "the Devil's agent, to make others as miserable as myself" (48); that drama-queen claim, her morbid mortification, and her indifference to her children—she eventually produces and abandons almost as many as Moll—all suggest Roxana is not merely distressed by the compromises she needs to make to survive, but is driven mad by them.

The jeweler gives Roxana what she admits is "the most agreeable life" until he is murdered two years later, and leaves her enough money to live comfortably; instead, theatrically damning herself "the queen of whores," she enters into a few other long-term relationships with equally decent men, but she's so traumatized by her earlier brush with poverty that she rejects an excellent marriage proposal in order to keep control of her own money. At one point she makes a sensible feminist argument for the importance of financial independence for women, but Defoe positions this as the crazy talk of of a "she-merchant," a "kind of Amazonian language" from someone who "would be a man-woman" (171). This is typical of the mixed messages Defoe sends throughout the novel: the luxurious life Roxana leads after she turns "whore" would look pretty attractive to most of his female readers—she is literally treated as a princess by a French prince, and has an affair with the king of England—as though Defoe were daring his readers to admit they too would turn whore in those circumstances. Roxana's

insistence that the foolish early marriage her father pushed her into is sacred because it is in accordance with "the laws both of God and our country," while her mature relationships with decent, generous men are sinful adulteries, ridicules those laws even as Defoe seems to defend them. Roxana's sense of propriety is exposed as provincial during her stay in France, where she learns that the prince's wife urbanely dismisses his infidelities as "foibles," while middle-class Roxana insists they represent "the meanest of human frailties" (107, 102). I doubt Defoe wanted his readers to drop British propriety for continental savoir-faire, though the text makes the latter (and Amy's moral relativism) more attractive and sensible than Roxana's lace-curtain views. The preface makes the usual argument that the novel is intended for "the instruction and improvement of the reader," but it's unclear what that lesson is, aside from the obvious one about Roxana's excessive vanity and ostentation: this fame monster wants to become the king's mistress and is given her exotic stage-name after performing an Oriental dance in a skimpy outfit at a ball. (Readers are also encouraged to speculate how many other aristocratic ladies earned their titles on their backs.) Roxana makes some pointed criticism about the way the rich squander their wealth "upon the most worthless creatures" (74), but this comes across more as self-loathing than anything else. (She selfishly *hordes* her wealth rather than circulates it, as Defoe recommends in his economic writings.) Roxana claims "I am a memorial to all that shall read my story, a standing monument of the madness and distraction which pride and infatuation from hell runs us into; how ill our passions guide us; and how dangerously we act when we follow the dictates of an ambitious mind" (161), but her case is so extreme, her actions so self-destructive, that we can't take her or the moralizing preface seriously. The novel titillates and tantalizes more than it instructs and improves; whatever it is satirizing, "the book exists as an example of failed satire," as Richetti writes (*Defoe's Narratives*, 193n2).

Roxana is a puzzling novel in other ways, beginning with its time scheme. Certain dates indicate it is set mostly in the beginning of the 18th century, but the title page places it "in the time of Charles II," who died in 1685 when Roxana was about 12. Some critics have argued that Defoe meant Roxana to exist on these two temporal planes simultaneously, time-traveling back and forth as in a sci-fi novel, but the chronological

discrepancies are too similar to the careless ones in *Moll Flanders* to take this seriously. Defoe isn't a magic realist. There are other inconsistencies—Roxana says "she's above fifty" on one page, but a few years later claims she's "pretty near fifty" (187, 245)—which suggest Defoe simply wasn't paying close attention. (During this period Defoe was simultaneously writing several books and a massive amount of journalism, plus running numerous business ventures, and it's pretty clear his novels weren't edited in the modern sense, just typeset.) There are numerous violations of point-of-view, many unnecessary repetitions, unbelievably convenient coincidences, obscure biblical and literary allusions that are inconsistent with Roxana's education, and other signs that *Roxana* was composed carelessly. As to its genre, it lurches from faux-picaresque to *chronique scandaleuse* to detective novel, then abruptly reverts back to 17th-century spiritual autobiography at the end. The conclusion is especially disappointing: Defoe walks out on Roxana just as her first husband did, as though he was tired of his adventuress, couldn't figure out how to continue the novel, or simply ran out of paper. At least he didn't give it a happy ending, which some of the publishers who reprinted it in the 18th century did.

Nonetheless, *Roxana* is memorable for its fierce female characters. Scenery-chewing Roxana is often upstaged by the amazing, amoral Amy, a vibrant, resourceful woman whose earthy pragmatism challenges her mistress's artificial ideology. Her devotion to Roxana is intense and borderline-neurotic: "I will starve for your sake, I will be a whore, or anything for your sake," she raves; "why I would die for you, if I were put to it" (28), and later she murders for her mistress. Her willingness to sleep with their landlord raises eyebrows, as does Roxana's frequent mention that they often sleep together. While not too much should be made of this—such arrangements were not uncommon then, and Amy has her share of heterosexual fun—it's hard to ignore the psychosexual dynamics "of her violent affection for her mistress" (32). Everett Zimmerman suggests "Roxana's putting Amy to bed with the landlord is her way of enjoying Amy," and "Both participate by imagination in every aspect of the other's sexuality" (167, 168). During those decades of sleeping together, Amy must have thrown a leg over her bedfellow at some point, and if she's as lively and cunning in bed as out of it, Roxana would indeed be a fortunate

mistress. And then there's Susan, one of Roxana's daughters from her first marriage and a personification of her guilt, who hunts her errant mother down during the last quarter of the novel "like a hound" (317), haunting her "like an evil spirit" (310). (Roxana irrationally fears that acknowledging Susan as her daughter would ruin her own reputation.) Amy wants to murder "the wild thing," but it's hard to say whether "the violence of her passion" (328) is sexual or professional. Roxana, Amy, and Susan are all obsessive, driven women who luridly light up these pages, easily overshadowing the nameless male characters in the novel.

"The novelty pleased," as Roxana says about some rival Oriental dancers, "but yet there was something wild and bizarre in it . . ." (179). I'm not sure what to make of *Roxana*, or of Defoe's other novels. On the one hand, they seem like commercial novels that merely tweak well-established genres—except for the sui generis *Journal of the Plague Year*—and read like they were dashed off between more important projects, which they were. They look gauche compared to some of the sophisticated French novels published around this time, such as Challe's *Illustrious French Lovers* and Hamilton's *Comte de Gramont* (which may be where Defoe got the name Roxana, if not from Montesquieu's *Persian Letters*). Their concern with sin and repentance is almost medieval, though Defoe's grasp of the implications of capitalism is perceptibly modern. Yet there's a rude vitality to them, an immediacy to these earnest monologues by questionable characters who can't be bothered to organize their stories into tidy chapters, an illusion fostered by the fact they were all published anonymously. They talk openly about money—bad manners in most previous novels—and do so in a plain-as-porridge prose style that was fairly new to the novel. (Only *Roxana* features any figurative language.) They didn't have an immediate impact on other novels, except of course for *Robinson Crusoe*, which launched its own genre (the robinsonade). Indeed, until the 20th century, that was read as a boys' adventure novel, the *Journal* as history, *Moll Flanders* and *Roxana* as trashy entertainment: only a few readers considered them literature. Since then critics have overcompensated by heaping more praise on them than they perhaps deserve, but it can't be denied Defoe left a footprint on the history of the novel as indelible as the one that thunderstruck his most famous character.

"Amatory fiction" is the preferred term for the female-authored novels that began flooding the market in the years following the publication of Manley's novels, essentially romances with a makeover and a new attitude. They still dealt with romantic relationships, but as Paula Backscheider notes in her book on Defoe,

> the heroines in increasing numbers came to be less conventional, less interested in marriage, more aware of their conflicts with society, which might be represented by parents, friends, or fiancé, more talented and intelligent, more students of books, people, and the world, more altruistic, and more likely to find partial fulfillment in life than to end in death, infamy, or bliss. . . . These women characters tended to be conventionally reared, if a bit spoiled, unusually independent and enterprising, unwilling to behave conventionally, and strong in defeat. . . . They refuse to accept the roles their families and society have chosen for them, they work for their own material and sexual gratifications, and they remain unrepentant. (183–84, 187–88).

A few push their defiant independence to ludicrous extremes, such as the woman who tears out her eyeballs and throws them at the Turkish emperor threatening to rape her (in *The Noble Slaves* by Penelope Aubin [1722]), but in general these women are more proactive and knowing than their romantic older sisters—which is to say their authors self-consciously manipulate the conventions of the romance genre they inherited. Like the "chick lit" that emerged in the 1990s, most of these novels were intended merely as mainstream entertainment rather than works of art, written for money rather than for critical acclaim, but there are a few that rise above the norm, beginning with a pioneering novella published in 1713, *Love Intrigues* by Jane Barker (1652–1732). Its narrator possesses virtually all the qualities of Backscheider's composite heroine: at age 15, Galesia attracts the attention of her cousin Bosvil, a law student, who strikes her as a much more interesting suitor than her neighbor Mr. Brafort (who rather creepily has loved her since she was "about ten or eleven"). For the next three years they have trouble defining the relationship: she likes him but fears he's not

serious; he likes her but fears she's devoted to Brafort, even after the neighbor suddenly falls ill and dies; Bosvil teases her by pretending he's in love with another woman, Galesia pretends she doesn't care, etc. etc.—typical teen stuff. Finally fed up with her excessive "caution and circumspection," Bosvil marries another woman, and Galesia beats herself up for "all my feigned indifferency and forced coldness towards him."[135] It's like a season of MTV's Awkward.

Though Barker acutely conveys all the confusion of a smart girl grappling with relationships for the first time, she is more concerned with depicting A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Woman. After her first rebuff from Bosvil, Galesia walks in the woods and begins composing poetry in her head: "Methinks I hear the Muses sing,/And see 'em all dance in a ring,/And call upon me to take wing." She writes out her poem on a smooth-barked ash, and "thinking it impossible ever to love any mortal more, resolved to espouse a book, and spend my days in study" (14–15). She asks her older brother to teach her grammar, which he does, but not without the sexist condescension that male critics would treat Barker and other emerging women novelists: Galesia complains that he's convinced she'll be "overthrown by the first difficulty I should meet with in syntax, knowing it to be less easy to make substantive and adjective agree than to place a patch, curl, or any other additional agreement on a young face" (15). She's aware that "many count a studious woman as ridiculous as an effeminate man, and learned books as unfit for our apartment as paint, washes, and patches for his. In fine, the men will not allow it to be our sphere, so consequently we can never be supposed to move in it gracefully; . . . But let the world confine or enlarge learning as they please, I care not" (37). As her relationship with Bosvil fails to progress, Galesia turns more of her thoughts into verse, but when it looks like Bosvil will propose after all, she receives a warning in a dream that he will disappoint her and is reminded by "an angry Power" of her true vocation: "my uncouth guardian said,/—Unlucky maid,/Since, since thou hast the Muses chose,/Hymen and fortune are thy foes" (25). Sure enough, Bosvil changes his mind—since Galesia is narrating this, the reader never learns why Bosvil blows hot and cold—and she's so enraged that she snatches a steel rapier and rushes off to kill him, but then settles on a different kind of revenge: "I will go home, and write

the whole scene of this treachery and make myself the last actor in the tragedy" (33).

Telling this story to a female friend years later, "Galesia"—she has given herself and "Bosvil" romance names—converts her life into "a diverting novel" (7), often interrupting her story to criticize her younger self, especially for resembling all teenagers in having "too great an opinion of their own wisdom" and refusing to confide in her mother (17). On a metafictional level, Jane Barker is telling the reader how and why she became a writer instead of a housewife (she never married), and showing off her intellectual cleavage: the novella is filled with her own poetry, literary allusions, learned references (e.g., to the legal commentary *Coke upon Littleton*[136] and Harvey's medical textbook *Circulatio sanguinis*), and much striking imagery. ("For love is like ghosts or spirits that will appear to those to whom they have a mind to speak, and to others are quite invisible" [33].) Barker got her revenge against whoever the original Bosvil was—beginning with calling him Bosvil—but more important, she dramatizes in *Love Intrigues* the difficulties facing women who heard the muses sing to them at a time when female authorship was still regarded by many as unladylike, even as a form of prostitution. "Punk and poetess agree so pat./You cannot well be *this* and not be *that*," snickered a critic named Robert Gould in reference to Aphra Behn.[137] Born during the Cromwell dictatorship into a family of Catholic royalists, Barker was old enough to remember how Behn had been treated (though Barker modeled her herself on chaste poet Katherine Philips, not on the profligate Behn), and she had watched the literary profession change from a coterie activity practiced by intellectuals and aristocrats to a commercial enterprise practiced by and for members of the middle class. She had written an allegorical romance in the 1680s for that earlier elite group (eventually published in 1715 as *Exilius, or The Banished Roman*), but *Love Intrigues* was the first of three novels she wrote for that later, larger audience, and is a harbinger of the scorn and condescension women novelists could expect from male critics. Before I get to the two even more impressive novels Barker published a decade later, however, I want to introduce a woman who attracted a load of scorn and condescension but who so dominated the genre in the 1720s that she was acknowledged as "Mrs. Novel" by future novelist Henry Fielding.

Eliza Haywood (1693?–1756) burst onto the scene in 1719 with the aforementioned *Love in Excess, or The Fatal Enquiry*, a three-part novel that begins like a feminist spin on traditional romances, but ends up validating their old-fashioned mores.[138] We're introduced on the first page to an independent young Frenchwoman named Alovisa, who chafes against "that custom which forbids women to make a declaration of their thoughts" (37), meaning their attraction to a man, and in her specific case, a gorgeous man named Count D'Elmont. In a refreshing role-reversal, D'Elmont plays the beautiful woman in earlier novels who is indifferent to love but can't help attracting unwanted suitors. Like Backscheider's composite, Alovisa is "unusually independent and enterprising, unwilling to behave conventionally," and devises a way to let the count know he has an admirer; but her proactive attitude, appealing as it is to the modern reader, is soon revealed to be her fatal flaw. Her rival for D'Elmont's affections is a simpler, less enterprising girl named Amena; through a misunderstanding, D'Elmont assumes Amena is his secret admirer and takes advantage of her genuine love for him one night by attempting to rape her—the first of many such scenes in the novel, always interrupted at the point of penetration. He thens learns that it is Alovisa who has been sending him the flirty letters, and since she's rich and Amena is not, he marries Alovisa and is relieved to hear the latter decides to hide her shame in a convent. But what seems like a victory for Alovisa in part 1 turns to defeat in part 2, where D'Elmont is again positioned between another alliterative pair of women: party girl Melantha and convent-bred Melliora, who becomes D'Elmont's ward a few days after his wedding. Watch and ward fall in love with each other at first sight; Alovisa jealously senses she has a rival, but assumes her husband still pines for Amena. Melliora, "restrained by honour, and enflamed by love" (137), struggles with her mixed feelings for the married count, and literally struggles against him in *three* near-rapes cock-blocked by the coquette Melantha, as much to Melliora's confused frustration as his. (Haywood's acknowledgment that convent-bred virgins have sexual feelings too is one of her innovations.) Via a bedtrick, Melantha manages to have sex with D'Elmont the night he accidentally kills his jealous wife—piercing her with his sword in the dark after symbolically doing the same to Melantha—which sends Melliora fleeing to (where else?) a convent. Haywood repeats

the pattern in the rather ludicrous part 3: in Italy, D'Elmont is sandwiched between modest Camilla and immodest Ciamara, and I don't have to tell you which one dies. (Actually, Camilla is beloved by Melliora's brother, but she fulfills the same function as Amena and Melliora.) After some ridiculous plot twists and turns, the novel ends with a group wedding in which D'Elmont is united with Melliora and lives happily ever after.[139]

Love in Excess is a 17th-century novel in racy 18th-century clothing. Several times it approaches pornography in its panting, heaving depictions of the attempted rape scenes, and Haywood rarely misses an opportunity to portray D'Elmont without his clothes on. (He's often in bed when he receives visitors, and has a habit of leaping out naked in response to their news; in one such instance, Melliora looks down and beholds "the effects of her unbounded passion" on him [250].) The female characters all itch with desire, even the good girls, and favor nightgowns or other flimsy garments that have a tendency to "fly open" and expose their charms. Yet the novel's 18th-century erotic and domestic realism—unhappily married Alovisa and D'Elmont get into shouting matches—can't disguise what is at heart a 17th-century French romance. Ciamara's defense of free love in part 3 echoes that of Galathée in D'Urfé's *Astrea* published a century earlier; there are inset "histories" formally similar to those in midcentury heroic romances; and Haywood relies on traditional 17th-century themes and plot devices (innocence besieged, love versus affection, a bedtrick, letters recited from memory, disguises, crossdressing, incredible coincidences, a group wedding, etc.). All she does is turn up the heat: as Richetti insists, the success of this and her later novels is due "to her ability to manipulate the fable of persecuted innocence to obtain the maximum erotic-pathetic intensity."[140]

At times *Love in Excess* reads like a parody of 17th-century romance, and at other times Haywood seems to pander cynically to "respectable" readers who require their heroines to be virtuous but who relish seeing their virtue menaced, repeatedly, by handsome noblemen. It's disappointing to see a witty, intelligent woman like Haywood punish witty, intelligent female characters such as Alovisa and Ciamara; the latter is a sophisticated intellectual who spends "the greatest part of her hours" in her own personal library, which may be a "satire on [French] ladies whose disposition to

gallantry seldom affords much time for reading" (190), yet she, like the urbane Alovisa, is killed off. True, Melliora is seen reading a book of philosophy in public, but in private she reads an erotic book by Ovid while reclining half-naked after a bath (in which compromising position the count, of course, catches her), as though her earlier display of intelligence were just an act. (The reading tastes of Amena and Camilla, if any, are unrecorded.) For this reason the novel feels compromised, hypocritical even, as Haywood seems to acknowledge when her narrator suddenly bursts out and defends women who love in excess:

> These *insipids*, who know nothing of the matter, tell us very gravely that we *ought* to love with moderation and discretion—and take care that it is for our interest—that we should never place our affections but where duty leads, or at least where neither religion, reputation, or law may be a hindrance to our wishes. Wretches! We know all this, as well as they; we know too that we both do and leave undone many other things which we ought not; but perfection is not to be expected on this side the grave. And since 'tis impossible for humanity to avoid frailties of some kind or other, those are certainly least blamable which spring only from a too great affluence of the nobler spirits. (186).

That blanket apology would seem to cover the passions of Alovisa, Melantha, and Ciamara, but Haywood sacrifices them to the Mammon of the marketplace; only the decorous virgins survive. More than any other novel, *Love in Excess* gave birth to the soft-core bodice-ripper that has titillated modern women ever since Rosemary Rogers revived Haywood's formula in the 1970s.

Buoyed by the financial success of *Love in Excess*, Haywood began churning out an excess of novels over the next decade. There's no happy ending to her third novel, *Idalia, or The Unfortunate Mistress* (1723), nor does it waste much time getting to the prurient stuff: as early as page 12, the headstrong, 14-year-old title character—an Italian nobleman's daughter who has run away from home to meet an admirer—fends off a rapist, only to submit to him two pages later. Thereafter she passes through the hands of one abductor after another who, enticed by "her malevolent beauty," threaten to rape her; in one rare flight of fancy—the rest of *Idalia* is written

in standard romancese—even the sun, "if capable of those desires which poets have described him with" (112), is tempted to jump her. Escaping from her abductors and disguising her self as a young man, she is rescued by a woman, but she too is "half mad with desire" and wants to have her way with Idalia. This woman, a jealous fury named Antonia, happens to be the new wife of one of Idalia's earlier abductors, whom she had fallen in love at first sight with, and after getting rid of the wife and living in sin for a while, the couple is forced to separate. Idalia's reputation catches up with her and she is treated like a courtesan until, after some soap operatic twists and turns, she accidentally kills her lover, and then commits suicide to put an end to her unfortunate life.

Haywood spells out the moral on the first page—"we shall find almost all the woes we languish under are self-caused, . . . either to pursue the gratification of some unruly passion, or shun the performance of an incumbent duty"—but I looked in vain for evidence "that *Idalia* is one of Haywood's most detailed examinations of the female psyche in her early fiction," as editor Mary Anne Schofield claims.[141] I saw only a vain airhead and a vengeful harpy overacting in a melodramatic rehash of 17th-century clichés (ravished virgins, abductions, pirates, a shipwreck, crossdressing, bandits, two interpolated "histories," poisoned wine, the monastery as a haven for distressed maidens, etc.) It's efficiently done, and I can see why it was popular, but I can't see calling it literature.

Most of the two dozen other fictions Haywood published in the 1720s are either too short to be called novels—some of the more notables ones, such as *Fantomina* (1725) and *The City Jilt* (1726), are only 30–40 pages long[142]—or too derivative to merit discussion.[143] For example, in 1725 Haywood published an imitation of Manley's *Atalantis* entitled *Memoirs of a Certain Island Adjacent to the Kingdom of Utopia* in which Cupid takes a "noble youth" on a visit to an enchanted well that represents London society, essentially 290 pages of scandalous gossip. It's more gamy than Manley's novel—a lewd woman named Marthalia is cursed by some lovers for using perfumes "which hindered them from discovering those scents that would have been infallible warnings of what they might expect in [her] polluted sheets" (13)—and looks pretty trashy. (I'll admit I merely flipped through it.) Of course it was a huge success, so Haywood wrote a similar

one called *The Secret History of the Present Intrigues of the Court of Caramania* (1727), which has more of a plot: a thinly disguised account of the love lives of George II, his queen, and others attached to the court in the 1720s. In her introduction to a modern reprint, Josephine Grieder feels "Mrs. Haywood's attempt to introduce some degree of literary sophistication into the scandal chronicle should certainly be given credit" (11), but they are remembered today only because Alexander Pope was so incensed by Haywood's insulting references to his friend Martha Blount (the stinky Marthalia) in the *Kingdom of Utopia* and to his neighbor Henrietta Howard in *Caramania* that he made some coarse remarks about her in his *Dunciad* (1728), which damaged her reputation.[144] At that point Haywood returned to the theater—she had previously been an actress, and now was writing plays—but she resumed writing fiction in later years, so we'll meet her again.

Like Haywood, Penelope Aubin (1679–1731) spices the half-dozen short novels she published in the 1720s with numerous near-rapes, though in her case rapists are cock-blocked by God, not mortals. A pious Catholic, she sought "to reclaim our giddy youth" to "virtue, by methods where delight and instruction may go together," as she announced in the preface to her first novel, *The Strange Adventures of the Count de Vinevil and His Family* (1721).[145] Her methods of delight and instruction involve placing virtuous Christian teenagers in sexual danger in exotic locales (Turkey, Barbary, Russia, the Americas) where dark-skinned heathens utter commands like "Slaves! go, search the chambers, and bring her naked from her bed that I may ravish her before [her father's] face, and then send his soul to hell" (chap. 2 of *Count de Vinevil*, the "her" in this case being his beautiful 14-year-old daughter). "Providence," like a protective father, is an active, omnipresent character in these religiose fictions who tests Christians' faith and virtue by putting them in sexual situations and even tempting them to commit suicide in some desperate circumstances, only to reassure them of his reliability by saving them, again and again. Providence is a prophylactic that protects the true believer, or so Aubin would have her giddy readers believe. Enormously popular in the 18th-century and influential on Samuel Richardson, who allegedly wrote the preface to an 1739 edition of Aubin's works,[146] these corny novels have only camp value today. Recently, critic

Chris Mounsey, warning us against "heteronormative" reading, has tried to out them as queer texts; his essay is unconvincing, but at least it's interesting to read, which I can't say for Aubin's novels.[147] In 1729 she gave up writing fiction to become a preacher.

Rescuing amatory fiction from insipid sensationalism, Jane Barker returned to the publishing scene in 1723 with what Josephine Donovan correctly identifies as "one of the most important, if most ignored, works in women's literary history" (19), a delightfully eccentric novel whose full title is *A Patch-Work Screen for the Ladies; or, Love and Virtue Recommended in a Collection of Instructive Novels, Related after a Manner Entirely New, and Interspersed with Rural Poems Describing the Innocence of a Country Life*. On the simplest level, this is a sequel to *Love Intrigues*; picking up where it left off, Galesia relates the next seven years of her life, from around age 18 to 25. Still smarting from Bosvil's rejection, she continues writing poetry and studying medicine; becomes pen pals with some college boys; moves to London, a country girl out of place in the big city; endures deaths in the family (brother, father) and her mother's increasing pressure to marry; begins to doubt her poetic vocation and books in general; and ends on a low note as her mother dies and Galesia suffers a crisis of religious faith.

But rather than relate all this during a walk in a garden (as in *Love Intrigues*), Barker invented a distinctly feminine form for her feminine content. A much older Galesia loses her way during a stagecoach journey, falls into a river, and wanders sopping wet onto the estate of an aristocratic lady, who takes her into her home and shows her a huge patchwork screen on which she and her maids have been working. "A typical patch-work screen of the day," Barker's modern editor explains, ". . . was a large decorative piece of several panels, each measuring perhaps 9 × 2 feet. . . . Screens often displayed the skill of the needleworker and the status of her family, and could take years to finish. The patches or cloth pieces for the screen were appliquéd to the surface first, not sewn together first and then applied to a background, as some commonly think of patchwork quilts today" (xxxix–xl). Invited by her hostess to contribute to the screen (perhaps a metaphor for the muses calling Barker back to writing fiction after a decade), Galesia accepts and they send for her trunk "hoping that

therein they might find some bits of one thing or other that might be useful to place in the Screen. But when the trunks and boxes came and were opened, alas! they found nothing but pieces of *romances, poems, love letters*, and the like. At which the good lady smiled, saying she would not have her fancy balked, and therefore resolved to have these ranged and mixed in due order, and thereof compose a Screen."[148]

As Galesia proceeds to narrate her story in four "leafs," she decorates it with "bits of one thing or other": lots of poetry, mini-essays, recipes (in verse), and some gritty London anecdotes whose protagonists are incongruously given pastoral-literary names (Belinda, Lysander). Weaving back and forth from the past to the present, whimsically disregarding male linearity for female circularity, the novel's form is as unconventional as she is. In no hurry to marry, Galesia's swatches of fiction expose the reverse side of the romance narrative young women are not supposed to see: her parents recommend one guy to her whom she suspects of a "loose way of living," and sure enough he commits a robbery and is executed; in London, a neighborhood girl is seduced and infected with syphilis; she talks with a woman who deferred to her parents' choice of a husband rather than her own and was ruined as a result; hears of an "unaccountable" wife who lets her servant sleep with her husband and control their lives; and tells the antiromance of a luckless Londoner she calls Lysander whose kept mistress drives him to suicide—another suitor Galesia's mother picked out for her! But Galesia's attempts to create a counternarrative is frustrated: after a while her medical studies strike her as futile, and though she eventually acquires a room of her own in which to write, she turns against her poetic vocation and books in general—the literary equivalent of the "refusal of the call" in Joseph Campbell's mythic-hero paradigm.

There's a superb scene in which Galesia takes the stairs from her garret to the roof of her mother's house and surveys London: "Here it was that I wished sometimes to be of Don Quixote's sentiments, that I might take the tops of chimneys for bodies of trees, and the rising smoke for branches; the gutters of houses for terrace-walks; and the roofs for stupendous rocks and mountains" (124). But "she could not beguile my fancy thus," for her view of Parliament, Westminster Hall, and Westminster Abbey only reminds her of the abuses of politics, the law, and religion, respectively; dejected, she

returns to her garret and pens a poem "To My Friends, Against Poetry." Soon, she is writing such poems as "On the Difficulties of Religion." But as Galesia's hostess reassuringly adds each of these dark patches to the communal screen, the reader is assured that Galesia's unconventional life will someday be redeemed by an unconventional work of art.

Three years later, Barker published the final panel of her triptych, *The Lining of the Patch-Work Screen, Designed for the Farther Entertainment of the Ladies* (1726). Taking leave of her hostess, Galesia travels to London for the winter, but instead of resuming the story of her younger self where the *Screen* left off, the older woman listens to more than a dozen tales and anecdotes from various visitors and friends, which form a kind of *Reader's Digest* of all the popular fiction genres of the time, from sordid stories of seduced virgins to supernatural tales of monsters and witches. Every story ends with a moral proverb, as in Aesop's *Fables* and in Oswald Dykes's didactic compilations, one of which is quoted at one point.[149] But Galesia's unhealthy diet of pop fiction takes its toll, for near the end she falls asleep and has a nightmare of "robbers rifling, ladies affronted, maids deluded by false lovers, insolvent debtors dragged to jails by rude surly bailiffs, wives misused, husbands abused, whores slanting, honest women despised, girls trappaned by bawds, boys misled by drunkards, jilts and thieves . . ." (274)—all the tropes and plots of the best-sellers of her day. Galesia goes on to dream of visiting Parnassus and witnessing "some of the diversions of the annual coronation of Orinda," her girlhood idol Katherine Philips (275). Arriving a little late—which, Jane Spencer speculates, "perhaps expresses Barker's feelings, late in her life, that she has survived into a new and uncongenial age, when the tributes to the poet she admires are over" (69)—Galesia sits in a corner, where she is spotted by the queen of the fairies: "And whether she was angry to see a mortal in that assembly, or that she was excited by charity, is unknown, but she took a handful of gold out of her pocket, and gave to one of her gentleman-waiters, bidding him carry it to that mortal and command her away from thence" (277). This can be read two ways: Barker is getting paid to leave in punishment for selling out her girlhood hopes of attaining Parnassus via poetry and settling instead for cash from a commercial London publisher, which Barker may have felt

guilty about; or the gold is encouragement from her muse to approach Parnassus from an alternate route.

We're told Galesia wakes on the next page, but she's obviously still dreaming when she uses her "fairy treasure" to purchase some "female virtues" from a merchant and to sell them at a profit to the ladies of London, another metaphor for Barker's virtuous but commercial fiction enterprise. But the ladies have no use for sincerity, chastity, humility, and such goods—except for one ex-whore, who buys "a pretty quantity" of piety and repentance. Just as Galesia prepares to leave London and try her luck in the country, she receives an invitation from her hostess in the *Screen* to return to her estate in the spring, and there the novel ends, with no indication whether or not Galesia is still dreaming.

It's a puzzling conclusion to a puzzling novel. Offered to readers as a lining, or background, to the unconventional patches of fiction Galesia contributed earlier to the *Screen*, the conventional tales that make up the *Lining* could be interpreted as Galesia's apprentice-work as she abandons her dream of becoming a poet like Katherine Philips and learns to write fiction like Aphra Behn, whose novellas inspired a few of the tales in the *Lining.* One of her college friends in the *Screen* once asked her "If I liked Mrs. Philips or Mrs. Behn best? To whom I replied with a blunt indignation, that *they ought not to be named together*" (108). Years later, needing money, Galesia/Barker reluctantly studies and imitates Behn, *The Letters of a Portuguese Nun*, Defoe (named in her preface to the *Screen*), and her sisters in "amatory fiction." Barker apparently held her nose while doing so, for after one unsavory tale, Galesia reflects on it and

> also on those other stories she had heard amongst the ladies: she began to think the world was made up with extravagant adventures. Amongst the old romances, said she to herself, we find strange and improbable performances, very surprising turns and re-encounters; yet still all tended to virtuous ends and the abhorrence of vice. But here is the quintessence of wickedness designed and practiced, in a special manner, in the story of Jack Merchant, who sold both his lawful and natural son and murdered his concubine because she did not starve her child.
>
> Those honorable romances of old *Arcadia*, *Cleopatra*, *Cassandra*, &c. discover a genius of virtue and honor which reigned in the time of those

> heroes and heroines, as well as in the authors that report them. But the stories of our times are so black that the authors can hardly escape being smutted or defiled in touching such pitch. (251–52)

Throughout the *Lining* the narrator expresses her contempt for "the stories of our time" as she imitates them; of one young lady who runs off to join some Gypsies, Galesia says "surely she had been reading some ridiculous romance or novel that inspired her with such a vile undertaking" (237), and the protagonist of the next tale blames her troubles on the fact "I had read plays, novels, and romances till I began to think of myself a heroine of the first rate" (239). Barker often becomes impatient with the clichés of fiction: "I need not tell you what arguments he used to persuade her to be his bedfellow that night; we will suppose they were such as is common on those occasions" (264). A friend tells a story that, as editor Wilson notes, "closely resembles Aphra Behn's *The History of the Nun*," but when Galesia later meets a sad girl raised in a convent and asks if she has any similar tales to tell, she says no: that kind of stuff happens only in novels. As in the *Screen*, Galesia gives incongruously pastoral names to the fops and whores of the stories she hears in the *Lining*, goofily so near the end with such names as Malhurissa (the sad convent girl) and Succubella (a witch—and available to any budding drag-queen needing a stage-name). But the mention of "spring" and "morning" on the final page indicate she has worked through the nightmare winter of her apprenticeship (reading and writing commercial fiction) and is prepared for personal and artistic rejuvenation: resuming her writing career and composing something new out of all those old scraps of stories, which of course is the novel novel we've been reading.

In this final panel of Barker's Portrait of the Artist as a Young Woman, she dramatizes how she learned to write conventional fiction, but she didn't stop there, and certainly did not sell out, despite what the fairy queen might think. Instead of merely imitating the conventional novels of her time, Barker devised an unconventional form that critiques them and reconfigures their sensational, often immoral plots into cautionary fables with a moral purpose. In place of dumb virgins who keep falling for the same tricks, she offers a sensible young lady who learns Latin, medicine, and farm management (in *Love Intrigues*), prefers writing to flirting, and is willing to

remain single rather than marry badly. Barker wants to ween female readers away from what one critic calls "Realist comfort-food" to more intellectually nourishing and morally uplifting fiction.[150] The title pages of the *Screen* and the *Lining* announce her work is intended only "for the ladies," and to avoid scaring them away from her nontraditional fiction, Barker introduces a metaphoric structure based on traditional female group activities like patchwork, sewing, and embroidery, not to mention the "stitch 'n bitch" sharing of stories.[151] "By asserting continuities between traditional feminine activities and those of the new print culture," Barker's biographer Kathryn King proposes, "text-textile analogies such as that which organizes *A Patch-Work Screen for the Ladies* may have played a part in promoting a female reading community" (82). Barker also suggests, in the playfully complex address "To the Reader" at the beginning of the *Screen*, that her communal patchwork metaphor has political and even scientific implications: "whenever one sees a set of ladies together, their sentiments are as differently mixed as the patches in their work, to wit: Whigs and Tories, High Church and Low Church, Jacobites and Williamites, and many more distinctions, which they divide and subdivide till at last they make this dis-union meet in a harmonious tea-table entertainment."[152] Pushing her textile metaphor to the limit, Barker boldly equates literary creation with the creation of the universe: "This puts me in mind of what I have heard some philosophers assert about the clashing of atoms, which at last united to compose this glorious fabric of the Universe" (52).

Fulfilling her promise on the title page of the *Screen* that her novel would be narrated "after a manner entirely new," Barker in *The Galesia Trilogy* created one of the most innovative novels of the 18th century, a worthy female companion of *A Tale of a Tub* and *Tristram Shandy*. "The pleasure these stories provide acknowledges invention, manipulation, ground-shifting, and the wide possibilities of the reader's role," Patricia Meyer Spacks writes in admiration of the trilogy (37–38), but apparently too few of Barker's readers appreciated those possibilities, for her work was not reprinted and Barker was largely forgotten until she was rediscovered by female critics in the 1980s and *The Galesia Trilogy* reprinted in a fine scholarly edition in 1997. Jane Barker remains an asterisked footnote in

most histories of the English novel, but she's a star in the history of alternative fiction.

Female readers of the 1720s preferred to stick with Haywood's bodice-rippers, Aubin's R-rated Sunday-school lessons, and novels with titles like *The Reformed Coquette* and *The Accomplished Rake*. These two, both written by Mary Davys (1674–1732) while managing a Cambridge coffeehouse, are actually better than they sound. Like Haywood's *Idalia*, *The Reformed Coquette* (1724) concerns a "self-willed, headstrong lady who resolved to follow [her] own inventions" (60), but it is staged as comedy rather than tragedy. Flirty, 15, and financially independent, flighty Amoranda thrives on flattery and welcomes any fop who fans her vanity —"Her heart was like a great inn, which finds room for all that come" (18) —so her distant uncle sends her a priggish older man named Formator to be her guardian. First thing he does is to bounce two beaus named Callid and Froth, who planned to abduct Amoranda and force her to choose between them; next Formator steers her away from sleazy Lord Lofty, and bedtricks him into marrying a woman he had seduced earlier. (The names, the plot, and the witty dialogue are reminiscent of Restoration comedy; Davys wrote two plays a decade earlier.) Finally, Formator rescues Amoranda from an attempted rape by a man disguised as a woman; then Formator reveals that he too has been wearing a disguise: removing his fake beard, he is transformed from an old prig into a young lover, and convinced that his moral lectures have taken root, he proposes to Amoranda and admits the whole thing was a setup by her concerned uncle.

For a romantic comedy, *The Reformed Coquette* is rather frank and brutal at times, especially the near-rape scenes. After he's captured, Froth nastily tells Amoranda "how I would have used you had fortune been so kind as to have put you in my power; know then, proud beauty, I would—" (33). Amoranda cuts him off before he gets down to the dirty details, but she later quails as another would-be rapist threatens, "This minute, by the help of thy own servant, I will enjoy thee; and then, by the assistance of my arm, he shall do so too" (59). During an attempted stagecoach robbery, a man is shot in the head; horses are burned to death in a barn fire; Froth and Callid kill each other; and a subplot involves incest. The author assures us early on that there will be a happy ending, but Davys departs from convention by filling her comedy with the stuff of tragedy. She also colors outside the lines

by using several different rhetorical registers, ranging from romancese to Restoration wit to coarse servants' talk. She borrows the crossdressing device from older novels, but also plays them for laughs when two "ladies" take up cudgels and beat Froth and Callid almost to death. Another transvestite is so affectionate toward Amoranda that lesbianism rears its head, though our 15-year-old flirt, like Queen Victoria, can't imagine such a thing exists. *The Reformed Coquette* is a witty, cleverly plotted novel that exceeds generic expectations, even if—as the author frankly admits on the first page—it was written for money.

At first glance, Davys's final novel, *The Accomplished Rake* (1727), looks like a male counterpart, for it dramatizes the conversion of a young rake into a married man, but it is much darker, sleazier, and more complex. At age 14 John Galliard loses his father, and is allowed to run wild by his irresponsible mother; at age 20 he is shocked to catch her in bed with a footman, so he abandons plans to attend Cambridge (where he planned to party, not to study) and goes instead to London and quickly becomes what Davys sarcastically calls (on the title page) a "modern fine gentleman" and "a person of distinction." Galliard gambles, whores, and boozes away his nights with fops like Sir Combish Clutter and Cockahoop Clownish until he is deep in debt and weakened by venereal disease. Then he runs into Nancy Friendly, the 14-year-old daughter of a country neighbor, as dizzy a flirt as Amoranda; frustrated in his attempts to seduce her, Galliard drugs her one night with doped macaroons and rapes her while she's unconscious, leaving her puzzled and ashamed a few months later to discover she's pregnant. Though he experiences a few pangs of remorse when he learns Nancy has given birth to a boy, Galliard continues his rake's progress for another few years—he could have posed for Tom Rakehell in William Hogarth's graphic novel of that name (1735)—until another potential rape victim named Belinda shames him into recognizing his child and marrying Nancy. Davys concludes this sordid tale by informing us she has "set two spies to watch his motions and behavior, and if I hear of any false steps or relapses, I shall certainly set them in a very clear light" (226). But unlike Amoranda, who seems to have been scared straight, Galliard gives no indication he has reformed, and will probably start harassing the maids before the month is out.

The reader can make that assumption because of the care with which Davys prepares the psychological ground for her protagonist. His mother's "airy, roving temper, unconfined and free" (127) deprives Galliard of the moral guidance he needs during his adolescence—his tutor Teachwell tries but fails to live up to his Bunyanesque name—and Galliard's discovery that his mother resumed sexual activity after her husband's death fills him with Hamlet-like disgust and sends him into the self-destructive spiral in London. As Belinda fends off Galliard's attempt to seduce her, she unknowingly but effectively stops him in his tracks by referring to his mother: "You are, 'tis true, a baronet by birth, but your mother has been some base, some faulty sinner, has violated a chaste marriage bed, and you are the abominable product of her vice, the spawn of some of her footmen" (193). Galliard realizes this might be true, and that destroys what's left of his self-esteem. That, and his mother's failure to instill moral values at a crucial age, ensures that it won't be long before he makes "false steps or relapses." The mother is the real villain in this novel, and Davys keeps after her in a subplot concerning her further relations with Tom the footman and his wife Margaret.

Although *The Accomplished Rake*, like its predecessor, is indebted to Restoration comedy for many character names and plot elements, it more significantly looks sideways to the French libertine novel and forward to the novels of Richardson and Fielding. Drugging a woman for the purpose of coitus occurs both in Challe's *Illustrious French Lovers* and later in Richardson's *Clarissa*, and Galliard earns his libertine credentials in one lurid scene when he is initiated into the notorious Hellfire Club: this entails going to a cemetery in the middle of the night, and on a tombstone set with wine and glasses, drinking a toast to the devil and renouncing "the BEING" (171). Davys's style, like Fielding's, is bold, allusive, and ironic; he might have written this description of the mother's reaction to her husband's death: "Lady Galliard had too much resolution and courage to struggle with grief, but like an expert fencer gave it one home thrust and silenced it forever, hardly allowing the decorum of a month's confinement in a dark room, though her wild behavior told the world she was but too well qualified for such an apartment forever" (129).[153] The language is often coarse: the terms "bitch" and "whore" are tossed around freely, and others

like “slut” and “harlot” are ill-disguised by dashes; one character says, “Honor, like a virgin’s virtue, is too nice to be fingered by every dirty hand that knows not the value of what they sully” (143), and another character, returning from rabbit-hunting, asks Galliard (in Belinda’s presence), “tell me how you like my game, b- G—e ’tis better hunting hares than whores, for here have I in half an hour got one, and was half a year in pursuit of the other bitch and lost her at last, so we will have this puss for our supper, and let the D—l take the other for his” (208–9). The novel oozes with venereal disease, and a husband Galliard cuckolds deliberately has sex later with a “peppered” whore so that he can infect his wife and her other lovers with syphilis. Galliard literally licks his lips at the sight of a new girl in town. Although a few female writers like Behn and Haywood got a little smutty at times, Davys sounds more like Fielding and Smollett. The novel appeared anonymously, and if not for the fact it was published by subscription, its readers could be forgiven for assuming the novel was written by a man.[154]

And like Fielding, she employs an intrusive narrator, comically so when she toys with the narrative concept of limited omniscience. After Galliard leaves for London, the narrator travels back and forth from there and his country home:

> Sir John seemed very sensible at so kind an offer, and when they got to London accepted of it, to which place three days more conveyed them, where I shall for a while leave Sir John and cast an eye back to Lady Galliard, whose story would end very abruptly unless a little further pursued. I left her somewhat uneasy in mind . . . (145)

> In short, she [Galliard’s sister, another victim of the mother’s negligence] had more of the mother than the father, and here I leave her for some time to get ahead, then catch her again, when she thinks herself out of my clutches. (146)

> . . . and since I have nothing to say of the knight [Galliard] at present, rather than lose so much time, I think fit to return into the country and see how things are transacted at Galliard Hall, where I no sooner entered than I saw Tom and his wife arrive . . . (148)

> [Tom] promised to give up his accompts the next day, and desired she would be easy until then. What other discourses they had I know not, because I was called away to lend an ear to Lady Galliard and Busy [her maid]. (152)
>
> Every new minute filled [Tom's] mind with tender sentiments succeeded by grief, till at last revenge took place, of which more hereafter, for I am this morning going to take coach for London again, where I left my young knight . . . (154)
>
> I will now leave them a while to compare notes together and step back to the bagnio to see what becomes of the two antagonists, they were both got into the house before I came . . . (162)

The silly idea of a narrator literally traveling between locations to report on her protagonists is a ploy Fielding and Sterne will play with, and justifies the narrator's use of the term "tragi-comedy" (197) to characterize this otherwise grim novel. *The Accomplished Rake* did not reach as wide an audience as *The Reformed Coquette*, nor is it as popular with the few critics in recent years who have written about Davys; this neglect has obscured its importance as England's first libertine novel and its anticipation of the great English novels of the 1740s.[155]

There are many other novels of the 1720s by female authors, but with the exception of Barker and Davys, they belong to the history of pop culture, not literature. Along with Haywood and Aubin, they are the daughters of the Grub Street hacks Swift and Arbuthnot mocked a generation earlier, "content in simple narrative to relate the cruel acts of implacable revenge, or the complaints of ravished virgins blushing to tell their adventure before the listening crowd of city damsels" (*John Bull*, 94). I certainly enjoyed sitting in on Jane Barker's sewing circle, but like Galesia I'm begin to overdose on "ladies affronted, maids deluded by lovers," &c &c. I need to clear my head with a man's novel, and fortunately one is at hand featuring a man with a phallus big enough to put out a palace fire.

Popularly known as *Gulliver's Travels*, Jonathan Swift's *Travels into Several Remote Nations of the World* (1726) challenges conventional ideas of genre. "Is *Gulliver's Travels* a novel?" Northrop Frye asked over 60 years ago. "Here most would demur, including the Dewey decimal system, which puts it under 'Satire and Humor' " (303), and including contemporary critics like Robert Letellier, who states flat out, "*Gulliver's Travels* is not a novel."[156] Is so, and here's why: First, as Michael McKeon cautions, "the retrospective standards by which we judge what is 'novelistic' are of problematic relevance to the generically uncertain narratives that are native to the period of the novel's gradual stabilization" (341). Second, form, not content, should determine the classification of a literary work. If a writer relates an imagined matter in verse, it's a poem; if in dramatic form with dialogue distributed among actors, it's a play; if in prose fewer than (say) 40 pages, it's a short story; if in prose long enough to be published separately as a book, it's a novel. Frye goes on to make a distinction "between fiction as a genus and the novel as a species of that genus" (303), but I've argued all along that *the novel* is a genus—fiction is the family classification one level above, which consists of two genera: short fiction (tales, short stories) and long fiction (novels)—and "species" should be used for various genres: detective novel, bildungsroman, fantasy novel, Western, realistic novel, erotica, YA novel, science fiction, and so forth, each of which has subspecies. In the introduction to the Oxford edition I'll be citing, Paul Turner writes, "*Gulliver's Travels* starts like a novel, . . . The adventures, however, soon become too fantastic for a novel, and the characterization of Gulliver is not always of central importance" (xv). Turner makes the common error of assuming that realism is the defining feature of the novel, rather than merely one of many modes a writer can choose from, and further assumes an element of fantasy disqualifies a work of fiction as a novel, meaning works like *One Hundred Years of Solitude* and *Gravity's Rainbow* are not really "novels," which would come as a surprise to their authors, publishers, and readers. Even realistic novels contain elements that are unrealistic—just as the most outlandish fantasy novels contain some realistic elements—and who is to say when and where a work of fiction becomes "too fantastic" to be considered a novel? Critics can argue until Doomsday about which *species*

a book-length fiction belongs to—is *Gravity's Rainbow* a war novel, a Menippean satire, an encyclopedic novel, a transhistorical hippie trip, a hysterical realist novel, a_____?—but it makes more sense, given the creativity of novelists and the ever-mutating diversity of the genre, to classify them all under the genus Novel.

Not only does *Gulliver's Travels* illustrate the formal definition of a novel (a book-length work of fiction), but it is a classic demonstration of its masterplot: "The novel records the passage from a state of innocence to a state of experience, from that of ignorance which is bliss to a mature recognition of the actual way of the world."[157] *Gulliver's Travels* is not merely a series of cartoonish adventures, a parody of travel books, or a satire of 18th-century English politics, but more importantly the story of a conventional, patriotic citizen whose eyes are opened to "the actual way of the world" and is disgusted by what he sees. Turner is wrong to say "Gulliver is not always of central importance"—he does not disappear into the text, as Ishmael does in *Moby-Dick*—for everything he sees (and we see) is filtered through his sensibility and elicits a response from him. (Turner goes on to say, correctly, "As Gulliver progresses through this series of world-views, his own character and attitudes change" [xxi].) The reader is easily distracted by miniature people, giants, mad scientists, and talking horses, but behind all that, formally and thematically, there is a *novel* about a man undergoing a midlife crisis as he gradually realizes everything he thought he knew about life is wrong, and his subsequent failure to get it right.

You know the story: a middle-aged doctor named Lemuel Gulliver, too honest (he implies) to profit by his medical practice, becomes a ship's surgeon in 1699; after surviving a shipwreck, he finds himself on a tiny island called Lilliput (north of Australia), where he is 10 times larger than its citizens. Initially suspicious, the Lilliputians come to an understanding with the "Man Mountain," except for a faction that eventually drives him off to a neighboring island, from whence he returns to England in 1702. Restless after this adventure, Gulliver sets off again, but in June 1703 he is abandoned off the coast of Brobdingnag (near Alaska), where he is 12 times smaller than everyone. After three years, shaken to the core by the king of Brobdingnag's brutal pronouncement on the human race, Gulliver decides

to return home, but 10 days after arrival he accepts an offer to travel again; in 1707 his ship is captured by pirates and he is abandoned on the island of Balnibarbi (east of Japan), beneath the floating island of Laputa. Tiring after three years of conversing with Laputa's crackpot scientists and philosophers, Gulliver leaves by way of Japan and returns to England in 1710. After five months, he accepts an offer to command his own ship, but his crew mutiny and abandon him near the island of Houyhnhnmland (north of Tasmania), populated by intelligent horses and a tribe of subhumans called Yahoos. Gullible Gulliver comes to regard this as a rationalist utopia, but after four years the horses ask him to leave, so he sorrowfully makes his way back to England in 1715, so repelled now by humankind that he avoids his family and hangs out in the stables. Five years later, he writes this account of his travels, publishing the teachings of the Houyhnhnms in the hope of "seeing a full stop put to all the abuses and corruptions" of his homeland.[158]

As the dates above indicate, Gulliver's travels occur during the same period as *The History of John Bull* by Swift's fellow Scriberlian. That was the story of how an average Englishman got wise to the legal and political "abuses and corruptions" around him, learned to take matters into his own hands, and triumphs over them. Gulliver faces the same challenges, but goes down in defeat. Something of a failure when he leaves England, his ego receives a much-needed boost in Lilliput, where his colossal size makes him the personification of British sea power and the might of the English empire. A commoner back home, Gulliver is ennobled by the emperor and aristocrats, and is made a *nardac*, the highest honor in the land. It's even rumored that the wife of the court treasurer "had taken a violent affection for my person" and "came to me incognito" (1.6), which Gulliver humorlessly denies, too naïve to see how ludicrous that charge is, or how closely Lilliput resembles his own "beloved country" (1.8). But his naïveté and patriotism are taken down several pegs by the king of Brobdingnag, who grills Gulliver for several days on English and European history and customs, and then delivers a crushing blow to his ego: "I cannot but conclude the bulk of your natives to be the most pernicious race of little odious vermin that nature ever suffered to crawl upon the surface of the earth" (2.6). In the next chapter, a rattled Gulliver tries to explain away the

king's verdict, but it's obvious the king has made him feel small—literalized and confirmed when Gulliver reads a gigantic book on "the weakness of humankind" (2.7).

It is at this point that Gulliver's misanthropy sets in, for after he's rescued from Brobdingnag by sailors his own size, he regards them as "the most little contemptible creatures I had ever beheld" (2.8). This contempt deepens during his time in Laputa, especially so when he visits the nearby island of Glubbdubdrib, whose sorcerer-governor calls up the spirits of famous Europeans (from Alexander the Great to Descartes) to converse with Gulliver and give him the inside story: "How low an opinion I had of human wisdom and integrity when I was truly informed of the springs and motives of great enterprises and revolutions in the world, and of the contemptible accidents to which they owed their success" (3.8). That opinion drops even lower in Houyhnhnmland, where the Yahoos represent human nature at its worst. Rejected by the Houyhnhnms for being little better than a Yahoo, Gulliver adds self-loathing to his loathing for humankind, and ends up a miserable misanthropist.

During all the circus attractions of the novel, Swift keeps the focus on Gulliver's moral development, which is a defining feature of novels, unlike fictional travel books and utopias where an often unnamed narrator merely reports what he sees and returns home unchanged. *Gulliver's Travels* is many things, but at heart it is a character study of a man who fails to benefit from his unique moral education. Because the real world doesn't match the one he grew up with—and one of the triumphs of the novel is the way Swift makes the unreal real—Gulliver rejects it entirely, instead of learning his lesson: his sessions with the king of Brobdingnag, the king-size moral treatise he reads immediately after, and his interviews with the spirits of historical figures all provide the means by which he can correct his view of the world, calibrating it to his newly acquired knowledge rather than "by his bias and partiality to the place of his birth" (4.7). But Gulliver can't handle the truth, and fails to pick up on a distinction the Brobdingnagian king makes; His Majesty concluded from Gulliver's evidence that the *bulk* of humans are odious vermin, not *all*. The king observes that Gulliver himself seems to "have escaped many vices of your country," and during Gulliver's travels he encounters a few people who treat him with selfless generosity, such as the Brobdingnagian girl Glumdalclitch and the sea captain who

rescues him at the end, Pedro de Mendez. There's also his wife, who apparently remains faithful during his 16 years of travel. But Gulliver fails to distinguish between individuals (as misanthropic Swift did in personal life) and goes from one extreme to another, from one of the greatest "lovers of mankind" (4.2) to one of the greatest haters, and from the extreme of Puritanism to the extreme of Houyhnhnm inhumanity. For characters in most novels, experience, like travel, broadens the mind and corrects earlier, usually misinformed assumptions about the world, but Gulliver has a fatal flaw that prevents him from acquiring a mature perspective on life, and it's sad to see a fundamentally decent man turn into such a wretch. *Gulliver's Travels* could as easily be shelved under Tragedy as under "Satire and Humor."

Swift drew upon earlier genres of fiction for his novel, and any well-annotated edition will reveal how much he borrowed from Lucian's *True Story*, More's *Utopia*, Rabelais's *Gargantua and Pantagruel*, Cyrano's *Other World*, and from any number of utopian fantasies, traveler's tales, animal fables, science fictions, and political allegories. But Swift also took advantage of the growing use of realism in novels. We don't even learn the name, much less the background, of the narrator of Bacon's *New Atlantis* (which is parodied in the voyage to Laputa), but *Gulliver's Travels* begins with the kind of backstory found in the more realistic novels of the day, including such subtly significant details as that Gulliver's family came from Banbury and that he attended Cambridge, places associated with Puritanism, which goes a long way toward explaining many of his later actions. His status as a middle child means he can't rely on an inheritance and must make his own way, and the fact that about the only thing he tells us about his wife is the size of her dowry gives us one more piece of characterization. As in *Robinson Crusoe*, the paucity of detail about his wife and family speaks volumes about his autistic personality, and like Defoe's novel, *Gulliver's Travels* is filled with realistic details about how a person might cope in unfamiliar surroundings. There are some brilliant touches, such as Gulliver's unconscious habit of continuing to shout after he's been rescued from Brobdingnag, the kind of detail that previous novelists wouldn't have thought of. Nor did his predecessors deal with a person's need to eliminate body waste; Swift rubs our noses in details about urination, defecation, and sweat, not to mention some nauseating close-ups

of skin and complexions. For a so-called fantasy, *Gulliver's Travels* is unprecedentedly realistic.

At the same time, Swift's use of fantasy to convert intellectual concepts into unforgettable metaphors is stunning, whether it's exaggerating Gulliver's physical relationship to others to symbolize his difficulty attaining a proper sense of proportion and perspective (too big and distant in part 1, too small and close in part 2), or the means by which Lilliputian politicians gain office, or the loony inventions of the Laputians. Like Swift, Gulliver strives "to express myself by similitudes" (4.4), and just "as the reflection from a troubled stream returns the image of an ill-shapen body, not only *larger* but more *distorted*" (4.5), *Gulliver's Travels* functions as a funhouse mirror. It's funny to some readers, disgusting to others, and a challenge to all to see clearly into Swift's "troubled stream." And like a deceptively clear stream, Gulliver's "plain, simple style" ("Advertisement," xxxii) refracts multiple levels of irony and conceals allusions to an encyclopedic range of materials.

As with any popular, unusual work, *Gulliver's Travels* launched a fleet of imitations, parodies, poems, and continuations—including one ascribed by Pope to Eliza Haywood, *Memoirs of the Court of Lilliput* (1727)—all deservedly forgotten today.[159] But its contribution to the art of the novel, its expansion of the genre's possibilities, took longer to be appreciated and assimilated. Here was a novel that could appeal to children as well as to intellectuals, one that mixed comic episodes with philosophical speculations, one that began and ended like a conventional novel but mashed up a variety of genres in between. It's a mode that few novelists (Voltaire, Diderot, Sterne, Carroll) would attempt until the 20th century: William Burroughs acknowledged the influence of Swift on *Naked Lunch*, and *Gulliver's Travels* provided the template for Black Humor, magic realism, and for novels like Vonnegut's *Slaughterhouse-Five*, Thompson's *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas*, and Self's *Great Apes,* to name only a few. *Gulliver's Travels* doesn't belong to the fairly recent mainstream of the novel, but it is a man-of-war on the longer river of innovative fiction.

Gulliver's Travels was originally intended to be a publication of the Scriblerus Club, named after its strawman pedant Martinus Scriblerus, and at one point Gulliver's travels were to be his own. The grave scholar is the

protagonist of a hilarious novel entitled *The Memoirs of Martinus Scriblerus*, written sporadically between 1714 and 1729 (though not published until 1741) principally by John Arbuthnot and Alexander Pope, with some help from Swift and other Scriblerians (John Gay, Thomas Parnell, and Robert Harley). This little masterpiece of learned wit begins with glimpses of his prenatal existence and his eccentric education at the hands of his antiquarian father, who, like Sterne's Walter Shandy, derives his pedagogy from ancient, often arcane sources. His father then hires a trifling tutor to teach young Martin rhetoric, logic, and metaphysics, and after that our scholar progresses to anatomy, psychology, and finally to literary criticism. Visiting a London sideshow, Martin falls in love with the blue-eyed blonde half of a pair of Siamese twins—Bohemian, actually—and after one of the most ludicrous courtships in literature (he looks forward to "leaping into the four soft arms of his mistress" [14]) he marries her/them, only to have the marriage annulled after one of the most ludicrous legal procedures in literature (his lawyer cites the mythical "Geryon with three heads and Briareus with a hundred hands" as precedents [15]). To mend his broken heart, he sets off on a series of travels, first to "the remains of the ancient Pygmean empire," then to "the land of the giants," then to "a whole kingdom of philosophers," and finally to an unidentified location where "he discovers a vein of melancholy proceeding almost to a disgust of his species"—an itinerary that should sound familiar.[160] Turning his back on love, Martin begins his academic career, and the short novel concludes with a preview of his discoveries and publications, including an essay "persuasive to people to eat their own children, which was so little understood as to be taken in ill part" (17).

The Scriblerians have a field day with this humorless pedant, who knows just enough about enough subjects to appear learned, but who lacks the sense to put his learning to good use, squandering it instead on trivial topics and textual quibbling. A lightning rod for their thunderbolts of wit, Scriblerus provided the means "not merely of ridiculing the follies of party writers, critics, editors, and commentators," Kerby-Miller writes, "but of satirizing all follies among men of learning, whether philosophers or artists, antiquarians or travelers, teachers or poets, lawyers or dancing masters" (29). Swift pursued the same project in *A Tale of a Tub*, but *Martinus*

Scriblerus does so in the form of a more accessible bildungsroman, with enough attention to Scriblerus's twisted upbringing and failed romance to make us almost feel sorry for the nerd as he begins his solitary life of Grub Street hackwork. The authors seem to have taken a perverse delight in collecting and satirizing examples of the abuses of learning, for their brilliant parodies of antiquarianism, rhetoric, legalese, abstract philosophy, and heroic romances are deeply erudite and uproariously funny. Unfairly neglected, *The Memoirs of Martinus Scriblerus* is one of the great comic novels of the 18th century.

Among the publications by Scriblerus listed on the final page of the novel is "Notes and Prolegomena to the *Dunciad*." Let me float this proposition down from the flying of island of Laputa:

In 1728, Alexander Pope published his mock-epic poem *The Dunciad*, a three-book attack on all the poets and critics who had been harassing him all his professional life, and a grim satire on the decline of English culture, which he viewed with as much despair as his fellow Scriblerian Swft. In 1729, he reissued it as *The Dunciad Variorum*, edited by Martinus Scriblerus, who made it his own by engulfing the original poem in ponderous editorial matter: prefaces, voluminous notes, emendations, appendices, and an index. This is the same procedure Vladimir Nabokov followed 230 years later when he first wrote a mock-epic poem entitled "Pale Fire," then added the crazed editorial apparatus by Charles Kingbote, thereby converting the poem into a novel. Can we call *The Dunciad Variorum* a proto-Nabokovian novel? I noted earlier that Nabokov modeled Kingbote partly on the narrator of Swift's *Tale of a Tub*, but the *form* of his novel was obviously suggested by *The Dunciad.*

In one sense, it is a sequel to *The Memoirs of Martinus Scriblerus*: having learned how he was trained as a critic, the reader now watches him in action, bungling his way through Pope's complex poem: he begins with a selection of "Testimonies to Our Author," which mingle insults with praise, but he refuses to adjudicate: he doesn't agree with the high praise Pope has received, but is too timid to venture an opinion of his own, so he concludes the section by stating "we shall determine on nothing but leave thee, gentle reader, to steer thy judgment equally between various opinions. . . ."[161] As he sees it, a critic's skill set includes "smartness, quick censure, vivacity of

remark, certainty of asservation, [and] acerbity" (75), but not judgment. Scriblerus limits himself to textual quibbling, beginning with the title (should it be spelled *Dunceiad*, or even *Dunceiade*?), to identifying literary allusions (including some that have escaped the "poet himself" [74]), and to second-guessing the author's intentions: "such is not surely the judgment of our poet . . ." (3.333n), "far be it from our author to suggest . . ." (4.607n). Like *Pale Fire*, *The Dunciad Variorum* can be read as a novel that dramatizes the contentious relationship between writers and their critics, the story of a third-rate scholar dealing with a first-class work clearly over his head, but vain and pompous enough to believe he truly understands the work and can correct its faults. (Scriblerus concludes his edition with several pages of errata.) Pope's idea of having a dunce comment on his *Dunciad*, while not original, was a brilliant stroke;[162] and while he obviously didn't consider the variorum edition to be a novel per se, its thematic and formal resemblance to Nabokov's novel makes it tempting to call it one *avant la lettre*. But this argument is starting to sound like one Scriblerus would make, so I'll drop it.[163]

Reluctant to take leave of the dazzling publications of the Scriblerus Club —do we have time to listen to Gay's *Beggar's Opera*?—I want to note one more unwitting contribution Jonathan Swift made to the novel. In 1738, he published a book known as *Polite Conversation* (full title: *A Complete Collection of Genteel and Ingenious Conversation, According to the Most Polite Mode and Method Now Used at Court and in the Best Companies of England*), a side project he had been working on since 1704. A parody of the instructional "courtesy" manuals of the time, it purports to be the work of a dotty old social parasite named Simon Wagstaff, who informs us that he has spent 36 years gathering witty remarks, clever comebacks, and fashionable proverbs from his time in polite society, and now wants to present them to the nation as a guide for aspiring socialites and as a cheatsheet for those who find themselves stuck in conversation with nothing to say. Wagstaff casts his examples in the form of a novella dramatizing a day in the lives of a half-dozen members of high society, which he summarizes in "The Argument":

> Lord Sparkish and Colonel Atwit meet in the morning upon the Mall; Mr. Neverout joins them; they all go to breakfast at Lady Smart's. Their conversation over tea, after which they part, but my lord and the two gentlemen are invited to dinner. Sir John Linger invited likewise, and comes a little too late. Their whole conversation at dinner, after which the ladies retire to their tea. The conversation of the ladies without the men, who are supposed to stay and drink a bottle, but in some time go to the ladies and drink tea with them. The conversation there. After which a party at quadrille until three in the morning, but no conversation set down. They all leave and go home.

What follows is 70 pages of vapid dialogue exposing polite society as a clique of airheads who speak in clichés because they are incapable of an original thought. Here they are at dinner:

> *Lord Smart*. And the best doctors in the world are Doctor Diet, Doctor Quiet, and Doctor Merryman.
> *Lord Sparkish*. What do you think of a little house well filled?
> *Sir John*. And a little land well tilled?
> *Colonel Atwit*. Aye, and a little wife well willed?
> *Neverout.* My lady Smart, pray help me to some of the breast of that goose.
> *Lord Smart.* Tom, I have heard that goose upon goose is false heraldry.
> *Miss Notable.* What! will you never have done stuffing?
> *Lord Smart*. This goose is quite raw. Well, God sends meat, but the Devil sends cooks.
> *Neverout.* Miss, can you tell which is the white goose, or the grey goose the gander?
> *Miss Notable.* They say a fool will ask more questions than twenty wise men can answer.
> *Colonel Atwit.* Indeed, Miss, Tom Neverout has posed [got the better of] you.
> *Miss Notable.* Why Colonel, every dog has his day. But I believe I shall never see a goose again without thinking on Mr. Neverout.

Lord Smart. Well said, Miss. I'faith, girl, thou hast brought thyself off cleverly.[164]

Wagstaff obviously thinks so, but as critic Mackie L. Jarrell observes, "What is gravely introduced as a model of good behavior turns out to be a holocaust of manners. The characters are not only bores, they are fatuous, rude, and obscene. They spit, yawn, stretch, scream and squall, pinch and slap each other, complain of the food and the smells in the room, slander their friends, insult each other grossly, and congratulate themselves shamelessly on their borrowed wit" (545–46).

The social satire is obvious enough, but what's more interesting is Swift's decision to rely solely on dialogue to propel the plot—what little there is of it, mostly Neverout's obnoxious attempts to seduce Miss Notable, whom Wagstaff calls his "hero" and "heroine," both intended "as patterns for all young bachelors and single ladies to copy after" (35–36). Swift was one of the few novelists of the time to use dramatic form for prose fiction: he finished *Polite Conversation* the same year Crébillon was composing his dialogue-novels (*The Opportunities of a Night, Fortunes in the Fire*), but it more uncannily resembles the modernist novels of Ronald Firbank, both in social setting and satiric intent.[165] Swift's concern with clichéd conversation as a sign of cultural decline is shared by a number of later novelists who likewise expressed that concern in inventive fictions, such as the "Dictionary of Accepted Ideas" supplement to Flaubert's *Bouvard and Pécuchet*; Joyce's *Ulysses* (which, as Jarrell documents, contains many quotations from *Polite Conversation*); "The Myles na gCopaleen Catechism of Cliché" by Flann O'Brien; the dialogue-heavy novels of William Gaddis; and Harry Mathews's *Selected Declarations of Independence*. *Polite Conservation* is valued by lexicographers for its record of how one segment of society spoke during Queen Anne's reign, but it is one more example why Swift can be regarded as a godfather of 20th-century experimental fiction.

The fertile 1720s was followed by the fallow 1730s; the baton of innovative fiction was passed to the French for a decade, during which only a few

English novels of note appeared. For example, there is the eccentric *Happy Unfortunate; or, The Female Page* (1732) by Elizabeth Boyd, misleadingly described in some reference books as "written entirely in blank verse rhythm."[166] This got me all excited until I looked at the opening sentence, which doesn't resemble any species of verse: "A shipwrecked mariner who was cast on shore upon the fertile isle of Cyprus, friendless and alone, lost himself in the agreeable gardens of Duke Bellfond, a ruling statesman in that province." The third paragraph, however, does scan as blank verse —"Here 'tis indeed the goddess keeps her court, and wantons with delight in every eye"—and thereafter the cadenced prose does indeed fall into a blank verse rhythm from time to time, not surprising from an author who also published poems and ballads. (The goddess is Venus: as in Wroth's *Urania*, Cyprus is the island of free love.) Ernest Baker was closer to the mark when he described the style as "semi-metrical fustian" (128) and demonstrates by setting a paragraph from the novel in verse, in which the heroine rails against society's rule that a woman should not openly express admiration for a man:

> Unhappy sex! forbid by prudent thought
> to breathe a sigh, or dart a meaning look,
> lest a censorious world name it a crime;
> and when the sad relief of words would ease,
> nay calm, and cessate woes, dread to unfold them,
> and have we aught of conduct, must deceive,
> lie to the friend we hug, yet call them dear.
> Such are the base reserves of modern friendship.
> O Jupiter, forbid the foul injustice!
> Defraud of thought, and perjury of souls!
> yet, so much she who hath a fame to lose,
> or any spark of modest thinking act,
> or be the laugh of crowds, the fop's remark. (102)

The quaint, almost Elizabethan prose is the most arresting feature of this odd novel: I had to slow down while reading it, and often needed to reread a sentence to comprehend what Boyd was saying; when an old woman is

“suddenly seized with convulsive pangs” during church, Boyd writes, “Many of no mean figure left devotion to help, if possible, where Death seemed busy; amid the friendly throng, a young lady of uncommon look showed deep concern, and told our Felix from that hour her slave, there is a fated minute to undo us” (131–32). Pardon? Until one rereads and realizes a comma is missing after “Felix,” the last part seems to mean, “and told our Felix [that] from that hour [he would be her] slave, [for] there is a fated minute to undo us,” with possibly a pun on “told,” as though at that fated minute the church bells *tolled* he would be her slave—which may sound like a stretch but is consistent with Boyd’s elliptical, Donnish diction.

Felix is the brother of Amanda, the happy unfortunate of the title, who (as the subtitle reveals) disguises herself as a page to be next to the man she loves, the Duke Bellfond of the opening sentence, a married man pushing 50. Even without the half-dozen appearances of the phrase “love’s excess,” Boyd was obviously inspired by Eliza Haywood’s early novels and uses many of the same plot devices (disguises, attempted rapes, bedtricks, husbands accidentally stabbing wives, etc.), but departs from her linear form. *The Happy Unfortunate* begins with Amanda already disguised as “Florio,” and teases the reader with hints of homosexuality between the page and his master, especially after the duke penetrates her disguise and makes out with the page, which leads one ignorant observer to call the duke “a what d’ye call it—an eunuch” and the page “my lord’s man-mistress” (51). A third of the way through the novel, Boyd puts this sticky situation on hold to explain how it all came about, which entails long stories about Amanda as a 14-year-old pursued by unwanted suitors, her brother Felix, Felix’s wife (the “young lady of uncommon look”), and her female companion Luvania, the heroine of a Behn-like novella of sensational adventures. (The author quotes Behn at one point in acknowledgment of her influence.) Boyd then returns to the present for the final third of the novel, in which Florio, now unmasked as Amanda, guiltily serves as the duke’s mistress until his wife conveniently dies, leaving him free to marry Amanda mere days before she gives birth to a girl (whom the duke names Florio). Defying the romantic genre’s traditional happy ending along with its linear form, Boyd quickly kills off Luvania, Amanda’s brother, the duke’s creepy brother (who tried to seduce Amanda), and then Amanda herself after she gives birth to a second child. The duke dies of grief.

Boyd also defies conventional morality. Virtually all the characters indulge in premarital sex and/or adultery, and the principals reject the idea that a loving couple requires a wedding license before they can have sex. Boyd marries off her lovers at the end as a sop to convention, but not before arguing that coitus between two people who truly love each other "is the gratefullest charm the god of nature gives" (113); "real love was never sin, they loved sincerely, and marriage lived in hearts," not in "form and ceremony that join the hand for title, or for wealth, or perhaps ends more vile" (316). "Where's the guilt of happy, mutual love?" the duke asked Amanda earlier (113), and by the end, she agrees that "mutual love is all we know of heaven" (337).[167] It's bluntly realistic at times: the duke's brother not only has syphilis, but passes it onto his wife, who dies as a result. Many characters are described as plain-looking, and a maid named Lucinda, "one of those thoughtless half-souled wretches," is dismissed by the narrator as an "animal" (42–43). But for all its unconventionality in attitude and technique, *The Happy Unfortunate* is a successful failure (to echo its oxymoronic title) rather than a successful novel, marred by chronological inconsistencies, tired tropes, and lazy plotting, not to mention labored diction that occasionally lapses into incoherence.[168] We shouldn't be too hard on it: Boyd claims in her preface she wrote this when very young, and was now publishing it only because she needed money to open a stationery shop, not because she was trying to reinvent the novel. (Like Barker's novels, it was published by subscription.) Brigid MacCarthy calls it "the dying gasp of the tradition of gallantry" (223), and at best *The Happy Unfortunate* is an offbeat transitional work between the older novels of Behn, Haywood, and Manley (*Atalantis* is quoted on the title page) and some iconoclastic novels published later in the 18th century.

Some of those tired tropes were given a fresh look in the graphic novels of William Hogarth (1697–1764), which are even more important in the transition from the amatory fictions of the 1720s to the more realistic novels of the 1740s. *A Harlot's Progress* (1732) consists of six engravings that were sold as a set and intended to be "read" like a novel. It tells the sad if clichéd story of a smalltown girl, Moll Hackabout, who comes to the big city of London to become a seamstress, gets sucked into prostitution, and dies at the age of 23 from venereal disease. We know these details because

of the texts that appear in Hogarth's engravings—various documents, letters, book covers, luggage stamps, etc.—meaning we literally need to "read" these plates rather than merely view them. Each one is like a chapter in a novel, for the wealth of detail allows the reader to infer Moll's backstory, construct the plot, assess Moll's character and that of the other figures that surround her, decode the allusions made via books and paintings in the background, and to note foreshadowings of her fate. The six engravings are not merely isolated moments in the harlot's progress, "but a series of closely knit events in which each follows almost deterministically from the other," as Sean Shesgreen writes in the introduction to his edition of Hogarth's works (xvi).

A Rake's Progress (1735) features a character similar to Davys's "accomplished" rake, and like her novel, it can be called a tragicomedy. Its protagonist, Tom Rakewell, inherits his father's estate and follows the usual path to perdition, but in a comically grotesque fashion. It is longer (eight plates, as opposed to six) and more complicated than its predecessor, for it includes a subplot concerning a naïve girl named Sarah, impregnated before the novel begins, who has followed Tom to London in the vain hope he will keep his promise of marriage. Instead, Tom ignores her, goes broke, and marries an old woman for her money, blows that, and winds up mad. Each of Hogarth's pictures is worth a thousand words, converting the verbal, temporal orientation of novels into a visual, spatial one while retaining the same subject matter.

Marriage à la Mode (1745), considered by many to be Hogarth's finest graphic novel, dramatizes the same corrupt practice Elizabeth Boyd railed against, a forced marriage made solely for economic and social gain. The ill-suited husband and wife pursue their pleasures separately after marriage —they are not depicted together after the second plate—and both die within a few years, but not before Hogarth indicts an entire society for colluding in such charades: the six engravings are crowded with opportunistic parents, merchants, lawyers, financiers, musicians, quacks, and hangers-on. All three of these graphic novels are didactic works, their protagonists object lessons in selfish, reckless behavior, but they exhibit the complexity of novels rather than religious tracts. For that reason they were admired by novelists like Swift (who wrote a poem praising Hogarth), Richardson (who asked Hogarth for a frontispiece to *Pamela*, never published), Smollett

(who depicts him as Mr. Pallet in his *Peregrine Pickle*), and especially Fielding, who had not yet written a novel, but who would cite Hogarth often when he did. After noting "Hogarth gets no mention in Ian Watt's *Rise of the Novel*," Ronald Paulson goes so far as to claim "he is the significant other of the novel's rise in Richardson's *Pamela* and Fielding's *Joseph Andrews*. Chronology alone tells us that without his graphic work in the 1730s both Richardson and Fielding would have written somewhat differently in the 1740s" (36).[169]

Memoirs of the Twentieth Century (1733) by the Irish clergyman and writer Samuel Madden (1686–1765) recalls Manley and Swift, but instead of mocking current affairs from a fantasy island like Atalantis or Lilliput, Madden does so from 270 years in the future. The bulk of the novel consists of 17 lengthy letters exchanged in the years 1997 and 1998 between the new British prime minister and his ambassadors to Turkey, Italy, Russia, and France, discussing the latest developments. Unlike Swift—who in part 3 of *Gulliver's Travels* anticipates the use of aerial warfare and computer language, among other inventions—Madden doesn't describe any technological advances or even try to imagine what the 20th century might be like. Things are more or less the same as they were in the 1730s, except the Jesuits exert greater control. The nations of Europe are still kingdoms (France is up to Louis XX), the borders of the Ottoman Empire are a little smaller, and America is still populated by "naked savages" (504). He does make a few accurate predictions, such as the Catholic bull dogmatizing the Immaculate Conception, the making of the Suez Canal, the growing power (and danger) of Russia, the Y2K scare, and the return of the Jews to Israel and the political troubles that would ensue. (He also made a lucky guess that a George VI would be on the throne of England, though he placed him at the end of the century rather than during His Majesty's actual reign [1936–52].) The futuristic setting is merely a smokescreen behind which Madden satirizes religions (all but his own Protestantism), rails against the abuses of monarchy, warns against certain trends, and offers solutions to some contemporary problems. Much of this is reasonable: the ambassadors accurately analyze the mess France was in (in 1730, that is), make excellent policy recommendations in medicine and economics, and promote some useful philanthropic projects (as Madden did in real life).

But all this is complicated by the fact that the 18th-century narrator claims these letters were delivered to him by an angel in a vision in 1728, after a long period of immersion in occult studies. In the first of three long prefaces—one at the beginning, one in the middle of the book, and one at the end—he tips us off to his mental state when he confesses "I have been as much perplexed how to introduce them [these letters] properly by a preface worthy of them as Cervantes himself, when he fell on that which stands before his inimitable *Don Quixote*" (1). Our suspicion that he too has been reading the wrong kind of books is confirmed when he proclaims "I am descended in a direct line by the mother's side from a son of that famous Count Gabalis in the 17th century, whose history is in everyone's hands, and whose wife, as all true adepts know, had carnal knowledge of, and was impregnated by, a certain invisible demon that called himself Ariel" (9–10). After failing as a politician, he retired to Yorkshire and studied magic and became "in some degree skilled in the Anthropomantia, or divining of men; the Cyathomantia and Oenomantia by cups and wine; the Chiromantia by the line of the hand or Palmistry; the Arithmantia or divining of figures; the celestial Astrologia by the stars; the Cleidomantia or Bible and key; the Stichomantia by different kinds of verses; . . . not to mention the Copromantia, as the Greek calls it, or in plain English, the art of divining from the dung of creatures: a matter I wish from my soul the sage inspectors of our close-stools were a little better skilled in than our weekly Bills of Mortality show they are" (247–48). Like Bordelon's Monsieur Oufle, the nameless narrator has obviously been driven mad by his occult books, many of which are named—Madden's wide erudition is everywhere in evidence in this novel—and he sounds like a cross between the narrators of *A Tale of a Tub* and *Polite Conversation. Memoirs of the Twentieth Century* could be a publication of the Scriblerus Club: he claims to reveal the "secret springs" behind politics (268), the same phrase Arbuthnot used in *The History of John Bull* (93).

What then are we to make of this madman's astute political commentary and Enlightenment values? Like Swift, Madden performs a clever ventriloquist act in which his dummy narrator mixes valid with outrageous remarks, and leaves it to his readers to distinguish between the two. The reader's irony detector gets quite a workout during this novel. For example, there are virulent expressions of antimonarchism throughout the novel,

claiming that most kings' "title to their empire are only founded in blood and violence and a few sorry laws which their swords have cut out for their own purposes" (357) and calculating "that since the 16th century to the 20th, the princes of Europe have sacrificed the lives of above 100 million of the bravest of their subjects to wars, begun and carried on for the most frivolous, silly excuses imaginable" (461). The ambassador to France furnishes some scandalous pages from Louis XX's diary that expose him as a stupid, gluttonous sot, and the other kings and emperors encountered in these pages aren't much better. Are these Madden's views, or are these intended to be taken as the ravings of a madman? Much of the novel satirizes religion, a dangerous game for a clergyman like Madden (and like Swift) to play; anticipating objections to his claim that an angel revealed these letters to him, the narrator cites biblical precedents and implies that anyone who believes, say, in the prophecies of Micah and the book of Revelation should have no problem with his, nor should readers doubt the reality of his angel if they believe in those of the Bible. At one point, Madden presents what are probably his own views on religion—"the best and surest way to please God is by a plain, honest, moral conduct without regarding particular systems of revelation and rules of faith" (263)—but that recommendation can go unnoticed in the hundreds of pages of religious satire, where occult and theological books are indistinguishable and superstition and religion represent two sides of the same coin.

Some of the letters, like the treatises the ambassador of France sends to the PM, are "remarkable for their oddness and novelty" (91). One describes the methods by which Laplanders create sunlight in the middle of a Russian winter; another concerns a Russian Jew who has traced his genealogy back to Adam and thus considers himself the rightful heir to every throne in the world; and in another we are treated to a 26-page description of all the relics the Vatican plans to auction off on 25 April 1998, beginning with "The Ark of the Covenant, the cross of the good thief, both somewhat wormeaten. Judas's lantern, a little scorched. The dice the soldiers played with when they cast lots on our savior's garment," and ending with "A tear which Christ shed over Lazarus, enclosed in a little crystal by an angel, who made a present of it to St. Mary Magdalen. Another from the Benedictines' convent, at Vendôme in France. N.B. This is the very tear which the learned Père Mabillon writ so admirable a treatise in defense of, to the honor of

God and holy church" (103–28). But most of the long letters grow tedious, and one is grateful that Madden stopped here and did not fulfill his promise to publish 5 more volumes of *Memoirs*. In fact, he recalled most of the 1,000-copy first edition a few days after publication, reportedly at the request of the real prime minister, Sir Robert Walpole, who brooked no criticism of his despotic regime. This may have been Madden's plan all along, for near the end of the novel the 18th-century narrator confesses "I am in much less pain for the verification of any predictions in these letters than I am lest the few copies I print of them may—through envy or folly, or an utter ignorance of their worth—be entirely lost or suppressed before those times when their truth and value will be confirmed" (519). Did Madden suppress his own book to make its claims appear real? If so, that's what comedians call commitment to a bit. Sometimes considered the earliest example of British futuristic fiction, *Memoirs of the Twentieth Century* now belongs to the genre of alternative history, though it's best viewed as Madden's attempt to emulate the learned, ironic satires of his fellow Irishman, Dean Swift.[170]

The much-hated Sir Robert Walpole—a corrupt, corpulent, conservative, censoring anti-intellectual—is also the satirical target of Eliza Haywood's most inventive novel, *The Adventures of Eovaai, Princess of Ijaveo: A Pre-Adamitical History* (1736). The premise is obviously taken from Crébillon's *Skimmer*, published two years earlier and translated anonymously into English in 1735 (by Haywood?—she later translated his *Sofa*). As you'll recall, *The Skimmer* purported to be a translation from the Chinese of an old Japanese novel that was translated from an extinct language. *Eovaii* is a translation made by a Mandarin in London of a 5th-century Chinese novel that was translated from the lost "language of nature" spoken by a country that existed in prehistory. That earlier translation, made by 70 scholars (winking at the Septuagint), was accompanied by notes from a variety of commentators, which the Mandarin summarizes, along with notes of his own, in a manner resembling *The Dunciad Variorum*, in which Haywood ignominiously appeared. The first female novel to write this sort of critifiction, Haywood tells her story the way she wants on top and lets the boys argue about it down in the footnotes. (She gives the most serious of them the laughing name Hahehihotu.)

The story concerns a 15-year-old princess named Eovaai, heir to the throne of Ijaveo, a country located between Australia and the South Pole. An exotic classic coming-of-age story, Eovaai loses her virtue and her country when she loses a jewel her father had given her, and is nearly seduced—sexually and politically—by an evil magician named Ochihatou (Walpole), chief minister of a corrupt, absolutist monarchy nearby. Eovaai is forced to abandon Ijaveo, but after obtaining a magic spyglass that not only allows her to see things as they really are, but also to see in the dark, she sees through his machinations, recovers the virtue she had lost when a bird stole her magic jewel (which Haywood stole from *The Arabian Nights*), and marries the handsome heir to Ochihatou's kingdom, joining their nations into the kind of limited, constitutional monarchy that Walpole's opponents favored.

Haywood smoothly meshes several genres together in this short novel: the Oriental tale, which was a popular veil to hide behind for anti-Walpole authors, who were legion;[171] the mock-pedantic critifiction; the supernatural tale; the 17th-century heroic romance (each new major character recites his or her "history" in the old manner); political allegory; and amatory fiction of the sort Haywood wrote at the beginning of her career. Liberated by the fairytale setting, Haywood goes to extremes that would have been unacceptable in her more realistic novels, politically and sexually. She all but calls for the abolition of monarchy via a republican named Alhauzuza, who grants Eovaai political asylum for a while and argues politics with her, undoing the damage Ochihatou had done earlier by seducing her with the luxuries of absolute monarchy. The novel is more sexually daring than Haywood's earlier bodice-rippers: the 15-year-old not only fends off several rape attempts (though not very hard on one occasion), but is challenged by Ochihatou to contrive "some new method of heightening the raptures of enjoyment, outdo all I have ever found in the warmest and most artful of your sex, be more than ever woman was, and force me in unexperienced ecstasies . . ." (122). To avoid that homework assignment, the teenager plays a bedtrick on him with the help of an older woman named Atamadoul, who has always lusted after Ochihatou—he turned her into a monkey and chained her to a wall in punishment for an earlier bedtrick—and while those two go at it in the dark, Eovaai watches

via her night-vision spyglass: “She no sooner looked through it than, instead of the smiling loves [cupids] she expected to have seen, she beheld two frightful and misshapen specters hovering over the heads of Ochihatou and Atamadoul and pouring upon them phials of sulfurous fire, while a thousand other no less dreadful to sight stood round the couch, and with obscene and antic postures animated their polluted joys” (135). And if that weren’t enough, Ochihatou later talks the teen into stripping naked with him, in which state she spends several pages resisting his embraces, rousing the translator to add a tongue-in-cheek footnote regarding Ochihatou’s erection: “The commentator observes that either Ijaveo must be a very warm climate, or Ochihatou of an uncommon constitution to retain the fury of his amorous desires, considering the position he was in” (151n1). Frustrated by the nude teenager’s resistance, Ochihatou then ties her by her hair to a tree’s branch and prepares to whip her when her husband-to-be happens by and rescues her, though he takes his sweet time before giving her a cloak. Later, hoping he’ll propose, Eovaai admits she’s glad he saw her naked: “the eyes with which he had regarded her . . . at the time of his delivering her from the rage of Ochihatou . . . made her think it not impossible he might have found something in her worthy of the most violent passion” (157–58). He does indeed, and they marry shortly after. Haywood could never have gotten away with such things in her earlier novels.

Though primarily a political allegory attacking Walpole’s domestic and foreign politicies, *Eovaai* is also a cautionary tale for young women, though a contradictory one. (All of Eovaai’s problems stem from exhibiting intellectual curiosity, usually a positive virtue.) As the young princess learns to negotiate with the adult world after the death of her protective father, she is flanked by the contrasting examples of Yximilla, a princess who resists sexual temptation better than Eovaai does, and Atamadoul, who succumbs and is turned into an animal as a result. Politically, she is flanked by the despotic monarchy of Hypotofa and the republic of Oozoff. The fairytale ending indicates Eeovaii has found a satisfactory middle ground between sexual and political extremes. Similarly, Haywood found a satisfying middle ground between the male learned novel and the female amatory romance, one that would allow her to express intelligent political views

while indulging in sexual fantasy, which makes *The Adventures of Eovaai* the most interesting English novel of the 1730s.

Allegory is also at work in one of the most popular novels of the 18th century, *The Memoirs of Signor Gaudentio di Lucca* (1737) attributed to the Catholic priest and scholar Simon Berington (1680–1755). The most impressive feature of this utopian novel is its elaborate structure: at the core of the novel is the confession of an Italian physician made in 1721 to officers of the Inquisition, but it begins with a preface by the English publisher who explains how he acquired the manuscript and had it translated. (He also adds some explanatory footnotes to Gaudentio's confession.) This is followed by a report from the inquisitor who first became suspicious of Gaudentio, arrested him, and ordered him to dictate this confession. (Other inquisitors occasionally interrupt Gaudentio to grill him on certain points, especially regarding his religious beliefs.) The confession was then passed along to a Venetian librarian named Rhedi for verification of Gaudentio's unbelievable story about a paradisaical kingdom in sub-Saharan Africa; Rhedi added loads of learned commentary to the confession (which allows Berington, himself a librarian, to show off his extensive erudition), and then made a copy for the English publisher. As a result, the novel is a cross between a court transcript and a variorum scholarly edition, a polyphonic text featuring a half-dozen speakers and commentators in which the author metafictionally critiques his own novel.

It's about a 19-year-old Italian who has some swashbuckling adventures (pirate attack, rescue by a Persian woman, sold into slavery in Egypt) before he is taken in 1688 to the country of Mezzorania, a virtuous, communistic paradise of the sun-worshiping descendants of an early Egyptian tribe. As in most utopian novels, we are given extensive lectures on their culture and customs, all of which seem more sensible than Europe's; for example, the educated young Mezzoranian ladies are amazed to hear that their European counterparts "have nothing else to mind or think of but visits and dresses," and "judged them to be no more than beautiful brutes" (373), expanding that to include both sexes, "esteeming those no better than brutes and *barbarians* who are not constantly employed improving their natural talents in some art or science" (381). Gaudentio experiences some cognitive dissonance as he realizes these "heathens" are more virtuous, more "Christian" than his coreligionists back home, though

he has to chose his words carefully when explaining this to the Inquisition. Nonetheless, the Catholic author seems to have intended this as a rebuke to Catholics rather than an acknowledgment that nonbelievers could possess an equally valid system of morality. Little actually happens to Gaudentio himself beyond eventually marrying a local girl and starting a family. (The publisher explains that some pages are missing from the manuscript; apparently Berington didn't want to detail his protagonist's married life.) But after their deaths, and despite loving the place, Gaudentio decides to return home in 1712. En route, he has some further adventures coincidentally involving *the exact same people* he swashbuckled with 25 years earlier. Satisfied by his confession, and threatening to send some Catholic missionaries to Mezzorania, the Inquisition releases him.

Gaudentio's adventures to and from Mezzorania—which take up more pages than his actual stay there—are the stuff of popular fiction, and his description of utopia seems to be indebted to Campanella's *City of the Sun* and Veiras's *History of the Sevarambians*.[172] The most original feature, after its elaborate structure, is Gaudentio's encounter with a wild man living near Mezzorania who turns out to be an Englishman, specifically a vicious caricature of a deist, which, for people like Berington, meant an immoral atheist. With this reprobate representing one extreme, and the virtuous but heathen Mezzoranians the other extreme (a pure, primitive form of Christianity), Berington offers a parable of the uncertain place of the English Catholic during the wilderness years between 1688, when the Catholic James II was dethroned, and 1712, two years after the return to power of the Tory government, which made life easier for English Catholics. Nicholas Hudson is wrong to call the wild-man deist "reminiscent of Robinson Crusoe," but he is right that "*Gaudentio di Lucca* bears many marks of crypto-Jacobite fiction" and "displays themes close to the heart of Jacobite lore: exile, disinheritance, and a hatred of that ugliest manifestation of eighteenth-century mercantilism, slavery" (585–86). This hidden agenda seems to have gone unnoticed by the general reading public, who made the novel a best-seller: some 20 editions were published in England and America between 1737 and 1850, along with translations into French, German, and Dutch. But its popularity is nothing compared to a novel published three years later.

In the conventional history of the English novel, 1740 is Year Zero, for that's the year a 51-year-old printer named Samuel Richardson (1689–1761) published a game-changing novel about a 15-year-old girl entitled *Pamela, or Virtue Rewarded*. That used to be considered the "first" English novel, but in these more enlightened times, its 1740 publication date is used as a B.C./A.D. demarcation to indicate the sea change that occurred in British fiction after it appeared. *Pamela* not only introduced a new degree of realism and a new class of heroine, but it was longer than any novel published since the 1690s, and sanctioned even longer ones, by Richardson as well as by others. Novels began appearing more rapidly after 1740 as well; specialists in the field don't hesitate to dismiss most of them as "trash" or "worthless," but the worthwhile ones – the classics as well as the engaging oddities – owe something to *Pamela's* popularity, which encouraged talented writers who might have disregarded the genre to embrace it as warmly as some readers wanted to embrace Pamela herself.

Pamela is an incongruous mix of several genres: old-fashioned romance (Richardson took the name Pamela from Sidney's *Arcadia*); the newer, racier amatory fiction of the 1720s (he typeset a new edition of Haywood's novels, which he loathed, and apparently wrote the preface to Aubin's collected fiction, which he admired); conduct and letter-writing manuals; and Christian propaganda (parables, martyrdoms, conversion stories). As a result, *Pamela* is both idealistic and realistic, a fairy tale set in the real world. From the older romance tradition, stretching back to Chariton's 1st-century *Callirhoe*, Richardson took the concept of an exceptionally beautiful maiden who undergoes a number of troubles and attempts upon her virginity until she marries a handsome aristocrat. From the newer genre, he borrowed all the usual tropes—near-rape, abduction, disguises, evil assistants—but set them not in sinful Italy or imaginary Ijaveo but in east-central England, where a 15-year-old servant named Pamela Andrews has caught the lustful eye of 24-year-old William Brandon, who has just inherited his mother's estate in Bedfordshire. (He's called Mr. B., but his full name can be inferred from various references.) Like Galliard in Davys's *Accomplished Rake*, he was spoiled by his mother and became a libertine, fathering a child while still in college, killing a man in Italy, and tumbling

any number of strumpets before he set his sights on young Pamela. (It's implied he's had his eye on her ever since she came to work for his family at age 11.) To his, and everyone else's surprise, this lower-class girl resists his attempts to seduce her; after a year of failed seductions and growing frustration, he abducts her and imprisons her in his house in Lincolnshire, where he again attempts to rape her (disguised as a drunk maid!) with the assistance of Pamela's jailer, Mrs. Jewkes, and with the threat of turning her over to his monstrous Swiss henchman Colbrand if she continues to resist.[173] After Pamela repulses him again—the sissy always faints during these attempts, and unlike Davys's Galliard, Brandon is enough of a gentleman to abstain from taking advantage—he realizes he's in love with her, and after she turns down a lucrative offer to become his mistress, he proposes marriage. Pamela admits to herself that she's in love with the monster who for over a year has sexually harassed her, kidnapped her, repeatedly attempted to rape her, and loaded her with vicious insults ("slut," "idiot") every step of the way—and accepts his proposal.

Most earlier romances and amatory novels would wrap things up with a quick wedding, but Richardson goes on for another 250 pages on their wedding plans, the wedding itself, Pamela's quick conversion from a spirited girl to a Stepford wife, and the challenges Brandon faces breaking the news to his relatives and friends. (The equivalent today would be a trust-fund playboy marrying his underage, illegal-immigrant maid.) Just when the reader is tempted to throw the novel at the wall, Lady Davers storms in for an electrifying, 20-page scene, but other than that, the second half of *Pamela* is insufferable, sticky with sentimentality and cloyingly Christian, as though Richardson intended Pamela's epistles to supplement Paul's in the New Testament. (The 500-page sequel Richardson published in 1741 continues in that stupefying vein, which is why even Richardson specialists avoid it.)

In the spirit of the conduct-book genre—things like Richard Allestree's popular *Whole Duty of Man* (1658) and Fénelon's *Telemachus*, both mentioned in *Pamela*—Richardson dramatizes the ideal conduct of an unmarried girl (the first half of the novel) and of a married woman (second half), going so far as to include an itemized list of rules for dutiful wives. And to align a woman's duty to her husband with that to her god,

Richardson makes a religious parable of the whole thing via numerous parallels between Pamela's tribulations and those of the ancient Jews: during her imprisonment, she composes a song based on Psalm 137 ("By the rivers of Babylon . . .") equating her situation with that of the exiled Jews, and compares herself to "the old murmuring Israelites" during their 40 years in the wilderness after leaving Egypt. It is on the 40th night of Pamela's "bondage" (as she calls it) that Brandon attempts the final rape, the turning point in their relationship that allows Pamela to enter the promised land of matrimony.

Richardson wanted to convert the cheap thrills of amatory fiction into Sunday-school lessons for Christian girls, and to do so made some questionable artistic choices, ones that he continued to struggle with after *Pamela*'s publication as he made hundreds and hundreds of revisions for later editions.[174] I'll leave Pamela's decision to marry her abusive master to those more familiar with the psychology of masochistic women and the Stockholm syndrome, and attribute Brandon's decision to marry her to Pamela's bewitching allure. Neither decision is very believable, but as I said, *Pamela* is closer to fairy tale and parable than to realism, for all its realistic touches. What's more interesting is Richardson's struggle with form. He chose the epistolary genre because he had been asked by a publisher to compile a collection of sample letters for the undereducated, and while composing examples a maid might use to write to her father for advice on sexual harassment, he became inspired and dashed off the two-volume, 500-page novel in two months, without thinking the whole thing through.[175] The epistolary mode worked fine for the first 90 pages: Pamela's letters home are numbered, and include four responses from her father (his dutiful Christian wife remains silent), but then Richardson ran into a problem. He needed to convey certain information and couldn't figure out how to do it within the epistolary framework, so he simply breaks through the frame and states, "Here it is necessary to observe . . ." (92) and spends 7 pages explaining matters before turning the narrative back over to Pamela, who writes one more numbered letter when she realizes that, imprisoned in Lincolnshire by this point, she has no means to post mail. So she begins keeping a journal, dated by days of the week rather than numbered. "O what inventions will necessity be the parent of!" Pamela

exclaims (122), and Richardson's invention was an inspired one. Pamela goes from writing a letter or two a month (during the first 90 pages, which covers about a year) to writing daily, even hourly, which takes unprecedented advantage of the immediacy of the epistolary mode. She sometimes halts when she hears someone approaching on the stairs, and in one case—after Pamela has married, to the outrage of Brandon's bitchy older sister, Lady Davers—she transcribes events in real time: "a messenger came up, just as I was dressed, to tell her [Mrs. Jewkes] she must come down immediately. I see at the window that visitors are come, for there is a chariot and six horses, the company gone out of it, and three footmen on horseback, and I think the chariot has coronets. Who can it be, I wonder? But here I will stop, for I suppose I shall soon know" (380). Now of course it's ludicrous to imagine someone scribbling like this while looking out the window, but again, realism isn't the point: *Pamela* is closer to *Cinderella* than to *Vertue Rewarded*, the realistic Irish novel we looked at earlier about a woman who likewise holds out for a wedding ring. The point is that Pamela has become a novelist, and her writing self has overtaken her acting self. By the time she reaches her wedding day, she confesses, "I have got such a knack of writing that, when I am by myself, I cannot sit without a pen in my hand" (342).

Not only are there more references to the act of writing in *Pamela* than in any other novel of the period, but Pamela's letters, her papers (as she calls them), quickly become part of the story. Early on, when Brandon learns Pamela is writing home to complain about him, he begins intercepting her letters; initially outraged that a mere servant would criticize her employer to her parents, he grows impressed at the sensibility behind those letters, and begins expanding his interest in her body to her mind. After he kidnaps her, he demands to see what else she's written, and sends to her father to retrieve other portions she smuggled out, like a fan who wants to read everything by his favorite writer. She continues writing, knowing from that point on that he will probably read what she writes, which he does; near the end, after Pamela has been accepted by Lady Davers and the local gentry, they too want to read her papers. In an almost literal sense, they are the first readers of *Pamela*, Miss Pamela Andrews's "little history of myself" (200).

Although the word "metafiction" didn't exist in 1740, that's precisely what Richardson was writing. Near the beginning, Brandon warns Pamela

(through his housekeeper) to "not write the affairs of my family purely for an exercise to her pen and her invention" (29), but this is what *Pamela* became for Richardson. (He was asked to write a guide-book, not a novel.) If we assume Pamela is novelizing her life rather than making a verbatim report—which her self-dramatizing use of biblical imagery, metaphors of witchcraft and sorcery, and her numerous violations of point of view encourage us to do (reconstructing dialogue during scenes at which she was not present, for example)—then that would account for remarks like Brandon's boast "we shall make out between us, before we have done, a pretty story in romance" (32) and his accusation to her father that "I never knew so much romantic invention as she is mistress of. In short, the girl's head's turned by romances" (93), implying that's how her letters should be read. Brandon parodies the diction of 17th-century heroic romance when he tells Mrs. Jewkes he should turn Pamela "loose to her evil destiny, and echo to the woods and groves her piteous lamentations for the loss of her fantastical innocence, which the romantic idiot makes such a work about" (163). "But this, to be sure, is horrid romancing!" (179) Pamela complains of one plot twist in her life story, and after Brandon has read the first part of her captivity narrative, he realizes he's the villain in Pamela's work and taunts her further: "And as I have furnished you with the subject, I have a title to see the fruits of your pen. Besides, said he, there is such a pretty air of romance, as you relate them, in your plots, and my plots, that I shall be better directed in what manner to wind up the catastrophe of the pretty novel" (232). This character in a novel realizes he's become a character in a novel.

On the one hand, these remarks (and there are plenty more) are obviously Richardson's self-congratulatory pats on the back, registering his growing confidence as he scribbled away that he was writing something that would delight readers. The op.cited Eaves and Kimpel note "that a love of having his characters praised [by other characters within his novels] was one of Richardson's besetting faults throughout his career. Several indirectly self-laudatory passages, where characters remark on Pamela's charming way of writing, are omitted" in later editions (82), but enough remain to indicate what kind of praise he anticipated.[176] On the other hand, these metafictional asides should put us on guard: though Richardson presumably

intended Pamela to be a reliable narrator, we must remember we see things only from her point of view—a lower-class, conservative, often childish, fanatically Christian one—and that, along with her self-dramatizing tendencies, a certain self-consciousness creeps into her writing once she realizes others beside her father and mother will be reading her mail.

But what's more intriguing than this metafictional self-reflexiveness is Richardson's bold collation of Pamela's body of work with her physical body. In the early part of the novel, whenever Pamela needs to conceal her writing, she slips it "into my bosom," often enough that her letters become perfumed with her skin; during her captivity, she sews her papers "in my undercoat [petticoat] about my hips" (227). A few pages later, Brandon asks to see her "saucy journal" and, when he correctly guesses she has it on her person, he threatens, "I will now begin to strip my pretty Pamela" to get at it (235), with the same fervor he earlier tried to strip Pamela to get at *her*. "But maybe, said he, they are tied about your knees with your garters, and stooped," like a libertine about to open the closed knees of a virgin. Pamela stops him and agrees to yield up her letters with all the shame and dejection of a woman forced to give up her virginity. Going to her room, she realizes "I must undress me in a manner to untack them," reinforcing the suggestion that, by reading her intimate correspondence, we (like Mr. B.) are sexually violating her, or at least indulging in voyeurism. (There are numerous mentions of Pamela's unmentionables: silk stockings, stays, garters, and other intimate garments rarely detailed in novels before this.) When the virgin offers Brandon her packet of papers, she begs him "to return them without breaking the seal," but the rake "broke the seal instantly and opened them" (239), taking her literary hymen in lieu of the physical one she has withheld. Later, after Pamela decides the man who put her through this humiliating experience will make a good husband, she flirtatiously offers to show Brandon a letter written to her parents; responding in kind, he "set me on his knee while he read it," and kisses her afterward (281), turning reading into sexual foreplay. Her body of work shifted his attention from her body to her mind, but here he enjoys both simultaneously—as does the reader: as we hold *Pamela* in our hands, it's as though we hold Pamela herself: "spanning my waist with his hands, [Brandon] said, What a sweet shape is here!" (374), praising the form of both Pamela and *Pamela*. No wonder some early critics called it pornographic.

Like Pamela, *Pamela* is by turns titillating and tedious, saucy and saccharine, admirably virtuous and revoltingly religiose. It's a remarkable expansion of the epistolary mode, adding intimacy to its immediacy, but the plot is preposterous. "Richardson was evidently conscious of the gap between the servant girl and libertine of the beginning and the fine lady and gentleman of the end, and tried to bridge it," Eaves and Kimpel write. "The gap proved unbridgeable; the plot of the novel forced Richardson to assume that a virtuous and intelligent girl can be made permanently blissful by marrying a man who has kidnapped her and tried hard to rape her" (85). The plot forced Richardson from romance to parable, bypassing realism: it's ludicrous that a servant-girl who grew up milking cows would possess such "fantastical" notions of virtue, which Richardson acknowledges by way of the reactions of other characters: a sympathetic friend near the beginning admits if she were being pressured for sex as Pamela is, "I hope I should act as you do. But I know nobody else that would" (41). Brandon dismisses her ideas of reputation and honor as "antiquated topics" (66), and Mrs. Jewkes is completely baffled by Pamela's highfalutin moral stance. Indeed, most of the time Pamela sounds more like the delicate, vaporish heroine of a 17th-century romance than a real servant in 18th-century England, few of whom shared Pamela's notions of virtue—most were resigned to the fact they were considered the sexual property of their masters—and even fewer of whom shared her talent for writing.[177] During the last quarter of the novel Richardson works overtime to create some sympathy for Brandon and credible motivation for his earlier actions, and while he succeeds for some readers, he fails for others.[178] Pamela and Brandon represent Christian *ideals*—chastity, forgiveness, and humility in her case; repentance, responsibility, and charity in his—not actual Christians living in Bedfordshire. *Pamela* is a Christian parable in the tradition of Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*, Christian porn in the tradition of Aubin's *Count de Vinevil*, and a didactic fable in the tradition of Aesop's, which Pamela frequently cites, and neither parable, porn, nor fable is expected to be very realistic. McKeon calls *Pamela* "an antiromance," which is valid in the sense that, as Richardson writes in his preface to the sequel, it "avoid[s] all romantic flights, improbable surprises, and irrational machinery" (vii), but

that term is better suited to the far greater novel Richardson would write later in the 1740s.

This incongruous, preposterous mix of romance and sermon made *Pamela* an instant success with the same kind of readers who would make *The Bridges of Madison County* a best-seller 250 years later, but the same mix made it an instant target of satire for more discerning readers. First to market was Henry Fielding (1707–54), who in April 1741 published *An Apology for the Life of Mrs. Shamela Andrews*, a bawdy parody. Parson Oliver is outraged to learn from his fellow parson Thomas Tickletext not only that he loves *Pamela* (and fantasizes at night about Pamela naked) but that the prurient, socially subversive text is being recommended by some preachers from the pulpit (which indeed was the case). So Oliver sends Tickletext a packet of letters exposing the true "Pamela": her real name was Shamela, she was no virgin, and she played Brandon (here called Booby) like a fish on a line in order to marry him for his money. The letters follow the plot of *Pamela* closely, though the editor resorts to the missing-manuscript ploy to avoid the cloying sequence of Pamela's engagement and wedding. Fielding gets dirty with Richardson's down-to-earth diction (before it was cleaned up for later editions) and apes his occasional use of the present tense. Like any burlesque, *Shamela* offers a number of cheap laughs, and like Swift, Fielding uses fiction as a vehicle for some sharp political commentary. But the naughty novelette is noteworthy as Fielding's first attempt at fiction: he had written two dozen plays before this—one of which, *The Tragedy of Tragedies* (1731), was published in a mock-scholarly format edited by "H. Scriblerus Secundus"—but since 1737 he had limited himself to journalism and studying for the bar. *Pamela* inspired him to take up fiction, and after dashing off this farce, he settled down to write a more ambitious novel parodying Richardson's best-seller.

While he worked on that, Eliza Haywood, always quick to jump on a literary bandwagon, published in June 1741 her *Anti-Pamela; or, Feigned Innocence Detected*, "an antidote," as its modern editor calls it, "to *Pamela*'s representation of virtue, chastity, and sexual deferral."[179] A hybrid of epistolary and expository prose, it concerns a girl of Pamela's age named Syrena Tricksy whose talk of virtue and fainting fits are not sincere, as in Pamela's case, but calculated scams, as *Pamela*'s worst critics

charged. Raised by her opportunistic mother to believe "that a woman who had beauty to attract the men, and cunning to manage them afterwards, was secure of making her fortune" (215), Syrena spends four years trying to land a wealthy husband, but undoes herself each time by acting stupid and/or by fooling around behind his back. Haywood doesn't parody Richardson's plot as Fielding did; instead, she makes subtle allusions to certain plot-points and key words in *Pamela* to paint a much more realistic picture of the effect pretty young girls have on men. Richardson wrote *Pamela* as a cautionary fable for young girls to keep their legs crossed and their hands folded in prayer, while Haywood wrote *Anti-Pamela* "as a necessary caution to all young gentlemen" (per the title page); she has no sympathy for her pretty airhead, and not trusting the tale to speak for itself, she inserts several didactic asides to make sure we're getting the message. Exposed at the end, scheming Syrena is sent to a relative in Wales, the ends of the earth for a London girl.

Not exactly a prostitute like Moll Flanders, nor a successful adventuress like Roxana, Syrena Tricksy is merely a lower-class gold-digger looking for a sugar-daddy. (Nowadays she'd become a stripper: she already has the name.) The sordid novel is remarkably realistic—Syrena has an abortion and deals with STDs—especially so regarding the female sex-drive, which most earlier novelists (and later Victorians) pretended was nonexistent. Syrena enjoys casual sex, thinks nothing of picking up a guy for a few hours of afternoon delight, and is unashamed of her "amorous constitution" (215), which, Haywood admits with worldly resignation, "more or less is inherent to all animated beings, and for that reason called the most natural" (186). It's hard to argue with her caustic timeline of male desire:

> there is indeed a kind of boyish love which begins about sixteen or seventeen, and lasts till twenty or something longer, but then it wears off, and they commonly despise the object afterwards, and wonder at themselves for having found anything in her to admire—from twenty to thirty they ramble from one to another, liking every new face, and fixing on none—after thirty, they grow more settled and wary, and if they love at all, it is commonly lasting; but a passion commenced between forty and fifty is hardly to be worn off—'tis certainly strange but true of that sex that amorous desires grow stronger as the power of gratifying them

> grows weaker, and an old lover is the most doting, fond fool on earth, especially if his mistress be very young. (169–70).

Anti-Pamela is much more realistic than *Pamela* is, both in domestic and amatory matters. Her lovers are faceless and mostly nameless, and Syrena's few flights of romantic diction (in which she sounds like Pamela, but which she picked up from plays) sound silly in contrast to the deliberately flat prose Haywood uses. When *Anti-Pamela* was rendered into French in 1743, its translator praised Haywood for succeeding "where Richardson fails: she creates a fully developed female character who is not a personification of virtues that women might hope to possess, but rather a persuasive representation of an individual endowed with vicious qualities that some women do possess."[180] *Anti-Pamela* is not a greater novel than *Pamela* by any measure, but it is more deserving to be called a breakthrough in realism than Richardson's fable.

Fielding returned in February 1742 with what is by almost any measure a greater novel than *Pamela*, namely *The History of the Adventures of Joseph Andrews, and of His Friend Mr. Abraham Adams*, an exuberant work that marks the British novel's *Wizard of Oz* transition from black and white to color. After dashing off *Shamela*, Fielding had evidently given some thought to the current state of English fiction—so poorly represented by the sensational success of *Pamela*—and found it wanting a comic novel "in the manner of Cervantes," as its title page goes on to promise. In his historically important preface to *Joseph Andrews*, and in the first chapter of book 3, Fielding dismisses "those voluminous works commonly called romances, namely *Clelia*, *Cleopatra*, *Astræa*, *Cassandra*, the *Grand Cyrus*, and innumerable others which contain, as I apprehend, very little instruction or entertainment"; nor does he care for "the modern novel and *Atalantis* writers" (3.1), by which he means amatory fictionists as well as those like Manley who wrote scandal-novels. Instead, he prefers the continental comic tradition of Cervantes, Scarron, Lesage, and Marivaux; he allows that English literature boasts some admirable narrative poems in this manner (*Hudibras*, *The Dunciad*), but no novels, which is why he decided to attempt "this kind of writing, which I do not remember to have seen hitherto in our language" (preface).[181] But Fielding goes back beyond

Cervantes to the very beginning of literature: he not only argues that Homer's epics differ from novels only on the minor point of meter—that is, the *Iliad* is essentially a war novel, the *Odyssey* an adventure novel—but that Homer was also the progenitor of the comic novel in his lost *Margites*, an epic poem about a dunce.[182] Fielding ignores the national, foundational purpose of later epics like the *Aeneid* (the origin of Romans) and *Paradise Lost* (the origin of Puritans) and focuses on their style and content, thereby coining his famous definition of his sort of novel as "a comic epic poem in prose," which takes as its theme not the wrath of Achilles but the ridiculousness of Britons.

Joseph Andrews begins as another parody of *Pamela* by switching sexes: while Pamela Andrews is fighting off the advances of her employer Mr. Booby (as Fielding called him in *Shamela*), her older brother Joseph fights off those of Booby's aunt, whose husband has just died. (As Joseph himself points out, he is named after the biblical prude who similarly turned down Potiphar's wife.) After the "luscious" footman repels her advances with the same pious appeals to virtue that Joseph's sister had made—which the narrator dismisses as "nothing but a rhapsody of nonsense" (1.13)—Lady Booby throws him out of her London house, at which point he decides to trek back to the village near her country home in Somerset. Here the novel changes direction, for Fielding realized the ongoing threat to virginity that sustains the narrative of *Pamela* couldn't be maintained in Joseph's case. Theologically, male chastity is as important as female, but in the real world it isn't taken as seriously, and it certainly doesn't carry the same erotic charge (and real-life consequences) as the loss of female virginity. So in chapter 11, Fielding switches gears and introduces "several new matters not expected," as its chapter title informs us. It is at this point that Fielding's novel progresses from Richardsonian parody to Cervantine comedy. The dramatic tension maintained by ongoing threats to virginity is transferred from Joseph to his girlfriend back home, the buxom Fanny Goodwill.[183] Henceforth, attempts on *her* virginity, not Joseph's, will goose the narrative along, for not only does Joseph want to marry her as quickly as possible, but nearly every man who beholds her tries to rape her. In fact, we first meet her in the flesh (after being told about her) in the middle of an attempted rape (2.9), and thereafter it becomes a race to see who will enjoy

her first, Joseph or his lusty rivals. Fielding may have scorned amatory romances like Haywood's, but he took full advantage of this well-trod trope.

Fanny is rescued from this initial assault by the true protagonist of *Joseph Andrews*, her and Joseph's pastor Abraham Adams. He's the Don Quixote of the novel, a naïve, absent-minded bookworm who rates reading over experience. "Knowledge of men is only to be learnt from books," he tells Joseph, and he boasts to a traveler that he knows the world better than he, for he has *read* about it "in books, the only way of traveling by which any knowledge is to be acquired" (2.16, 17). With his nose always up his Aeschylus (until he accidentally throws the Greek volume into a fire), Parson Adams's reverence for books reaches a comic apotheosis near the end when his eight-year-old son is reading a story aloud from a book: " 'But good as this lady was, she was still a woman, that is to say, an angel and not an angel—' 'You must mistake, child,' cries the parson, 'for you read nonsense.' 'It is so in the book,' answered the son. Mr. Adams was then silenced by authority, and Dick proceeded" (4.10). As a curate, Adams's chief authority of course is the Bible, and Fielding—like Cervantes before him—undermines its authority by making its chief spokesman and defender a learned fool "as entirely ignorant of the ways of this world as an infant just entered into it can possibly be" (1.3). Fielding apologizes at the end of his preface for "the low adventures" he puts his clergyman through, pleading "no other office could have given him so many opportunities of displaying his worthy inclinations." Christian ideals are sorely lacking in Fielding's England, exposing most of its population as rank hypocrites, but at the same time those ideals are revealed to be naively contrary to human nature and ridiculously irrelevant to everyday life: "Adams bid his wife prepare some food for their dinner; she said truly she could not, she had something else to do. Adams rebuked her for disputing his commands, and quoted many texts of scripture to prove *that the husband is the head of the wife, and she is to submit and obey*. The wife answered, 'It was blasphemy to talk scripture out of church; that such things were very proper to be said in the pulpit, but that it was profane to talk them in common discourse' " (4.11).[184] This is another instance of British hypocrisy (Mrs. Adams considers herself a good Christian), and another swipe at Pamela's brainless

piety (she becomes exactly the kind of doormat wife recommended in Adams's scriptural citations), but it is primarily another example of the disconnect between Adams's book-learning and the actual "ways of the world."

Adams is rather vain about his learning, as well as hypocritical—he counsels Joseph to submit to divine providence, but when he fears his son has drowned he ignores his own counsel—but he is not guilty of affectation, "the only source of the true ridiculous" according to Fielding's preface. This is what distinguishes Adams from other learned fools in English literature such as Butler's Sir Hudibras, Swift's narrator of *A Tale of a Tub*, D'Urfey's Gabriel John, and everyone's favorite punching-bag pedant, Martinus Scriblerus. Unlike them, Adams's learning has not eclipsed his humanity, especially with regard to charity. This quality—which Fielding, like Paul in his first epistle to the Corinthians, places above all others—is conspicuous in its absence both in those earlier pedants and in most of the other characters in *Joseph Andrews*, including Pamela when she shows up near the end. Adams never employs his erudition in impertinence or imposture, and though he's occasionally guilty of tactlessness and insensitivity, such lapses are never the result of maliciousness or inhumanity. His innocence compensates for his foolishness, and his love of learning for its own sake—as opposed to the dubious uses to which other pedants put it—encourages to reader to forgive his trespasses. His erudition never overshadows his humanity, and though he may be a learned fool, he is a lovable one.

Fielding's own erudition is everywhere on display, from his critifictional prefaces and digressions, to his satires of the law and theology (including the new sect of Methodists), and especially so in his comic use of the conventions of epic poetry. The latter, aimed at "the classical reader" mentioned in the preface, is always amusing, though Ian Watt goes too far when he suggests "Fielding's novel surely reflects the ambiguous attitude of his age, an age whose characteristic literary emphasis on the mock-heroic reveals how far it was from the epic world it so much admired" (254). Instead, Fielding surely regarded classical epics not as depictions of a lost world but as literary constructs every bit as artificial and unrealistic as the voluminous French romances of the 17th century, and thus fair game for satire. Fielding realized the novel should be used as a vehicle for a *realistic* depiction of life, not an idealistic one as in Homer's epics or Richardson's

Pamela. Consequently, he used realistic British names (even "Pamela" was exotically literary: early readers weren't sure how to pronounce it), referred to real inns and people in the novel (Joseph recalls serving a dinner party that included Alexander Pope), and voiced realistic concerns like the socioeconomic dependency of the poor on the rich when he records Lady Booby's return to her country parish:

> She entered the parish amidst the ringing of bells and the acclamations of the poor, who were rejoiced to see their patroness returned after so long an absence, during which time all her rents had been drafted to London, without a shilling being spent among them, which tended not a little to their impoverishing; for if the Court would be severely missed in such a city as London, how much more must the absence of a person of great fortune be felt in a little country village, for whose inhabitants such a family finds a constant employment and supply, and with the offals of whose table the infirm, aged, and infant poor are abundantly fed with a generosity which hath scarce a visible effect on their benefactor's pockets? (4.1)

What a remarkable thing to note, something one would expect to see in a serious, socially conscientious novel of the 19th-century, not a raucous, road-trip novel of the 18th century. Nor would one expect, amid all the bawdy seductions and rampant Three Stoogery, a textbook demonstration of the dominance of subjectivity over objectivity in the quotidian world (two lawyers give Adams diametrically opposed views of a local gentlemen, both of which are wrong according to Adams's host [2.3]) and in historiography ("some ascribing victory to the one, and others to the other party; some representing the same man as a rogue, to whom others give a great an honest character" [3.1]).

On the other hand, one *does* expect some metafictional fun from an avowed disciple of Cervantes and Scarron—whose *Comic Novel* is as important an influence as *Don Quixote*—and Fielding doesn't disappoint.[185] As in their novels, there are facetious chapter titles (e.g., 3.8: "Which Some Readers Will Think Too Short, and Others Too Long"); phony assurances that the narrator based his "biography" on interviews with

the principal characters; intrusive but always welcome digressions on various topics; an explanation for why he prefers dividing his novel into chapters (partly to deter dog-earing books); blasé refusals to narrate certain scenes that don't interest him (such as Pamela's first interview with Lady Booby, which, if anything like hers with Lady Davers, must have been a real catfight); his admission at one point that he included a "sarcastic panegyric" on vanity "for no other purpose than to lengthen out a short chapter" (1.15; not true, for vanity is a major contributor to ridiculousness, Fielding's mock-epic theme); invitations to the reader to participate ("That beautiful young lady, the morning, now rose from her bed, and with a countenance blooming with fresh youth and sprightliness, like Miss* — [*Whoever the reader pleases" (3.4)]); and technical asides ("Reader, we would make a simile on this occasion, but for two reasons: The first is, it would interrupt the description, which should be *rapid* in this part; but that doth not weigh much, many precedents occurring for such an interruption [in Homer and Virgil]. The second, and much the greater reason, is that we could find no simile adequate to our purpose" [3.6]). In a few instances Fielding followed his forebears too closely, such as the insertion of three interpolated stories—none of which is particularly interesting, and only one of which is germane to the plot—and in the hoary discovery processs by which Joseph's true identity is revealed. And like *Don Quixote*, *Joseph Andrews* contains a number of minor inconsistencies that were not cleared up in Fielding's subsequent revisions. (Unlike Richardson, Fielding made his novel better, but not perfect.) As with Parson Adams's foibles, these are readily forgiven, for this vibrant, hugely entertaining novel is a spectacular achievement, the first British novel to match the sophistication of the best European fiction of the time, as continental readers would attest when *Joseph Andrews* was translated into French, German, Danish, and Italian later in the 1740s.

I noted in chapter 2 that French writers in the 17th century had two paths open to them: D'Urfé's way (earnest, moral romance) and Sorel's way (worldly, iconoclastic comedy). Richardson and Fielding now offered similar avenues to 18th-century English novelists, for both spoke of introducing a new "species of writing." In a letter explaining his motive for writing *Pamela*, Richardson wrote, "I thought the story, if written in an easy and natural manner, suitably to the simplicity of it, might possibly introduce

a new species of writing, that might possibly turn young people into a course of reading different from the pomp and parade of romance-writing, and dismissing the improbable and marvellous, with which novels generally abound, might tend to promote the cause of religion and virtue" (*Selected Letters*, 41). Using the same phrase, and likewise distancing himself from "romance-writing," Fielding boasts near the end of the preface to *Joseph Andrews* of his new "species of writing, which I have affirmed to be hitherto unattempted in our language."[186] Henceforth, most English novelists would follow either Richardson's way (which most ladies preferred) or Fielding's way (for the lads). This choice is similar to the one that faced English novelists at the beginning of the 17th century, that between the high road of romance and the low road of comedy, and of course these are roughly the same options the Greeks and Romans left behind: as I wrote in my previous volume,

> Ancient Greek fiction would lead to medieval romances—especially those satirized at the beginning of *Don Quixote*—and Elizabethan love stories, the moral novels of Samuel Richardson and Frances Burney (and even the "immoral" ones of Sade), Gothic thrillers, Sir Walter Scott's historical sagas, eventually degenerating in our day into paperback romances, formulaic sci-fi and fantasy novels, and the soap operas of daytime television, *telenovelas* as they're aptly called in Spanish. Ancient Roman fiction, on the other hand, would lead to Rabelais and *Don Quixote* itself, to Sorel, Swift, Sterne, and Fielding (*Joseph Andrews* begins as a parody of the romance novel before changing horses), to Voltaire, Huysmans, and Wilde, and eventually to *Ulysses,* to Céline and the Beats, culminating in the ambitious meganovels of Gaddis, Barth, Pynchon, Coover, Theroux, Vollmann, and Wallace. (100)

But leave it to a woman to mess up this tidy male scheme.

Fielding's younger sister Sarah (1710–68) was a friend of Richardson, and in her first novel, *The Adventures of David Simple* (1744), she attempted a hybrid of the two novelists. Like *Pamela*, her novel is a Christian allegory about moral rectitude, practically a Sunday-school homily on benevolence; and like *Joseph Andrews*, it is a scathing satire on

British society, a bitter sermon on hypocrisy, envy, selfishness, class prejudice, and mean-spiritedness. "A kind of secularized *Pilgrim's Progress*," as Jerry Beasley calls it in *Novels of the 1740s* (183), Fielding's novel concerns a good but naïve man allegorically named David Simple, who is cheated out of his heritage by a scheming brother (shades of Jacob and Esau in Genesis); disgusted by this betrayal, Simple goes out into the wilderness of this world (central London) in search of a true friend. Like Diogenes in search of an honest man, he is disappointed in most people he meets, beginning with crooks in a gambling den (the London stock exchange), where he is offered insider-trading tips. Many of those he encounters have Bunyanesque names as allegorical as his: Mr. Splatter besplatters others in ridicule (à la Sarah's brother Henry), while Mr. Varnish conceals his ill-will beneath a veneer of politeness. (Actually these names owe as much to the tradition of comedic Restoration stage names.) A younger, less accident-prone Parson Adams—in a later novel called *The Cry* (1754), Fielding criticizes readers who focus on the clownish pastor's pratfalls and "overlook the noble simplicity of his mind" (prologue to part 5)—noble Simple is easily taken in by people, and is so disappointed in them that at one point he wonders "whether he should not go to some remote corner of the earth, lead the life of a hermit, and never see a human face again."[187] Fortunately, he wins back his financial estate and uses the money to rescue three good gentry from poverty: a woman named Cynthia, and a brother and sister named Valentine and Camilla. Turns out Cynthia and Valentine are old flames, and after the brother and sister are reconciled with their father (who had been led astray by their evil stepmother), a double wedding follows, along with a concluding sermon on tolerance and benevolence.

Technically, it's a jejune effort, somewhat at odds with itself as the author tries to meld Richardsonian romance (but without the melodrama) with Fieldingesque satire (but without the bawdiness and political barbs). She effectively conveys the desperation of a certain class of women who find themselves without money or a husband (like Fielding herself), untrained to support themselves, and thus dependent on the kindness of others, who mistreat them with smiling condescension and emotional blackmail. But her apologues lose something due to Fielding's decision to *report* them

secondhand rather than *dramatize* them firsthand: everything is filtered through David Simple, who reduces everything to "malignity" on the part of others. Like Galesia in Barker's *Lining of the Patchwork-Screen*, he spends most of his time merely listening to stories about Britons behaving badly, shaking his head after each recital and then moving on. (There's a novella-length one in the second half, set in France, that really drags down the novel.) Effeminately sympathetic and quick to cry, Simple is a bland, sexless character—the "true friend" he seeks could be of either gender—and largely passive despite his occasional acts of generosity. After a while, the reader becomes as annoyed as Spatter "to find him always going on with his *goodness*,—*usefulness*,—and *morality*" (2.2), as though his simple appeals to those virtues will solve the problems entrenched in a class-bound patriarchal society like England's in the 1740s.[188] By relating this material secondhand, Fielding seems to want to shield her readers from her dark materials; like the distressed "companion" to a touchy old lady, Fielding wants to speak her mind, but not to offend. Early on, she shies away from reporting a lower-class domestic argument "for, as I hope to be read by the polite world, I would avoid everything of which they can *have no idea*" (1.3). Her high-mindedness also causes her to withhold the details of Simple's proposal to Camilla, "as I have too much regard for my readers to make them *third persons to lovers*" (4.8), and she doesn't even provide physical descriptions of her protagonists: since "the writers of novels and romances have already exhausted all the beauties of nature to adorn their heroes and heroines, I shall leave it to my readers' imagination to form them just as they like best: It is their minds I have taken most pains to bring them acquainted with" (4.9)—a defiant departure from both Richardson and her brother, but one that leaves her novel in the realm of Christian allegory rather than that of the realistic novel. At best, it resembles the sort of *conte philosophique* Voltaire was about to embark upon.

Fielding pulls her punches in *David Simple*, but takes off the gloves in a sequel she published nine years later, subtitled *Volume the Last* (1753).[189] Instead of distracting readers with stories of others, Fielding keeps the focus on Simple as she subjects him to a variety of calamities in this grim adaptation of the book of Job (to which there are several allusions). After a decade of happiness in which Simple and his wife Camilla, along with

Valentine and Cynthia (plus their quickly multiplying offspring) live together in the country at his expense, he is swindled out of his estate, which plunges them into poverty. They are surrounded by selfish, perfidious characters who pile on further indignities until death carries most of them off at an early age, which the survivors endure with Christian fortitude. In Simple's deathbed soliloquy—which Fielding pieces together from "what, at various times, passed in his mind, and some part of which fell from his lips"—he admits his idealistic pursuit of friendship was his undoing, yet "there are some pleasures with which friendship pays her votaries that nothing in this world can equal" (7.10). There is no Job-like reversal at the end in reward for Simple's unshakable faith in his god and benevolence, and the author concludes her dour story with an expression of relief (shared by the weary reader) that Simple has "escaped from the possibility of falling into any future afflictions, and that neither the malice of his pretended friends, nor the sufferings of his real ones, can ever again rend and torment his honest heart."

Simple is too much of a Christian automaton, and his tormentors too cartoonishly despicable, for any of this to affect the mature reader, nor does Fielding win us over with her ill-disguised resentment of readers "who sit round a warm fireside, their minds unshaken by any accident from fortune and free from affliction," who are thus "very little qualified to judge of the actions" of her protagonist (4.3). *Volume the Last* can be read as a modern martyrdom, a parable of Christian forbearance, or even as a realistic account of what would probably happen to people as naïve as Simple and his friends. (If Fielding wanted to expose Christian meekness as a losing strategy in this world, she couldn't have done a better job.) The novel's goody-goody characters and sickeningly sweet children also anticipate that gooiest of British genres, the sentimental novel. Like the first volume of *David Simple*, the sequel is at odds with itself, a clenched-teeth effort to put a happy face on a relentlessly gloomy situation, and like its predecessor, it is "a disturbing indictment of the principles of 18th-century society."[190] Intending to write no further sequels herself, the author concludes morbidly: "if any of my readers choose to drag David Simple from the grave, to struggle again in this world and to reflect, every day, on the vanity of its utmost enjoyments, they may use their own imaginations" (7.10). As it

happens, one wag decided to take her up on that invitation, but we're getting ahead of ourselves.

Back in 1744, buoyed by the success of *Pamela* but nettled by the mockery Henry Fielding and lesser talents made of it, Samuel Richardson began drafting a novel that would steamroll his detractors: the enormous, inexorable *Clarissa* (1747–48), the longest novel in English literature until recently.[191] Although some of Richardson's readers still had even longer French romances in their family libraries, he was self-conscious about its length and defends it in both his preface and postscript to the novel; in the latter, he claims "there was frequently a necessity to be very circumstantial and minute in order to preserve and maintain that air of probability which is necessary to be maintained in a story designed to represent real life," and then concludes by arguing that bigger is better as long as the author is entertaining:

> In a word, *if* in the history before us it shall be found that the spirit is duly diffused throughout; that the characters are various and natural, well distinguished and uniformly supported and maintained; *if* there be a variety of incidents sufficient to excite attention, and those so concluded as to keep the reader always awake; the length then must add proportionately to the pleasure that every person of taste receives from a well-drawn picture of nature. But where the contrary of all these qualities shock the understanding, the extravagant performance will be judged tedious though no longer than a fairy tale.

His defense of *Clarissa*'s great girth hinges on those conditional *if*s: yes, the spirit of real life "is duly diffused throughout," and yes, "the characters are various"—from aristocrats and physicians to footmen and whores— though most are uninteresting, beginning with the title character, a priggish, humorless personification of Christian doctrine with whom no "person of taste" would want to spend more than 15 minutes in "real life." Her family is even worse: a tyrannical father, a weak mother, a pig-headed older brother, a mean-spirited older sister, and two tedious bachelor uncles. After struggling through the entire novel, Voltaire said of its cast: "if all those people were my relatives and friends, I could not become interested in

them" (*Selected Letters*, 205). Nor is there "a variety of incidents sufficient to excite attention, and those conducted as to keep the reader always awake." There are only a few key incidents, with the bulk of the novel devoted to endless analysis of those plot points, too often conducted in a soporific style that challenges the reader to stay awake. *Clarissa* is an "extravagant performance" all right, but one that could have achieved its goals in half the space.

This Christian fairy tale dramatizes in epistolary form the last year in the lives of two strong-willed individuals: angelic Clarissa Harlowe (18 going on 19) and diabolic Robert Lovelace (around 25), "two parallel lines which, though they run side by side, can never meet" (236). The clichéd adjectives are Richardson's, and repeated ad nauseam as Clarissa is compared to an angel throughout the novel, and literally becomes one at the end (per the novel's Christian mythos); similarly, the smooth-talking rake Lovelace is associated with Beelzebub, Satan, Moloch, and other demonic denizens of the Christian hell. (Fielding no doubt had these two in mind when he advised writers against "inserting characters of such angelic perfection or such diabolical depravity in any work of invention" [*Tom Jones*, 10.1].) On a visit to Harlowe Place in south England, Lovelace spots Clarissa and determines to seduce her and keep her as a mistress for a while until it's time to move on to his next conquest: a revenge-fueled pattern he's been pursuing ever since a woman jilted him as a teenager. He regards the seduction of this icy beauty as the ultimate challenge: "was ever hero in romance (opposing giants and dragons excepted) called upon to harder trials!" (31). Clarissa meanwhile is enduring trials of her own, for her family is pressuring her to marry a repulsive dolt named Roger Solmes, primarily because he's rich and his estate adjoins theirs. (She has already turned down a few previous suitors, preferring to live alone as an adult, if not in a nunnery.) Both principals have confidants who live far enough away to justify frequent letters: Clarissa communicates with her cool, flippant friend Anna Howe—about the only appealing character in the novel—and Lovelace writes to a fellow rake named John Belford, an ugly but good-hearted man who switches sides to Team Clarissa halfway through the novel and becomes the implied editor of this bulky collection of letters.

The novel falls roughly into thirds: the first 91 letters track in excruciating detail the bickering between Clarissa and her family for three months, along

with Lovelace's contrivances to spirit her away from Harlowe Place. Alert Anna has a premonition of how this will end and thus encourages her friend to write in "so full a manner as may gratify those who know not so much of your affairs as I do. If anything unhappy should fall out from the violence of such spirits as you have to deal with, your account of all things previous to it will be your justification" (1). This is the first of many instances where Richardson makes his characters request that their correspondents write in "minute" detail (his favorite word), a rather clumsy way of justifying the novel's circumstantial detail. It invariably makes Clarissa somewhat self-conscious about her writing, realizing (like Pamela before her) that others may read these private letters someday, which in fact happens even before she's dead as various characters begin copying and sharing her letters among themselves: there's a palpable sense of a novel in the making as everyone obsesses over Clarissa's "story."

Fearing she is days away from a forced marriage, Clarissa is tricked into running away with Lovelace on April 10th, and spends the middle third of the novel as his prisoner (letters 92–292), first in a safe house in St. Albans (20 miles NNW of London), then in a London brothel disguised as a boardinghouse. While there, she escapes temporarily but is brought back, where the brothel's madam and her girls drug Clarissa with opiates and encourage Lovelace to rape her while unconscious, done more in punishment for running away than from lust. (Indeed, he dismisses the actual *sexual* experience by implying she was merely like any other woman: "to use the expression of the philosopher on a much graver occasion, There is no difference to be found between the skull of King Philip and that of another man" [259].) The rape occurs on the night of June 12th; it takes Clarissa a week or so to recover from the drugs—"My head is gone," she tells Lovelace. "I have wept away all my brain" (261.1)—and then she manages to escape again on June 28th and hides herself in the house of a local merchant named Smith. There she gradually stops eating and allows herself to die "of grief," and the last, longest third of the novel (letters 293–537) records in numbing detail her physical decline to an ethereal skeleton, her death on September 7th (reaching toward the ceiling for Jesus), and the reaction of the rest of the novel's characters to the martyrdom of Saint Clarissa. Her older cousin, Colonel William Morden, who has been living in Europe during the first two-thirds of the novel, tracks down Lovelace and

kills him in a duel; it is implied that Lovelace, an excellent swordsman, allows himself to be killed in expiation for his treatment of Clarissa.

The dual moral of the story, Richardson pontificates in the preface, is "to caution parents against the undue exertion of their natural authority over their children in the great article of marriage, and children against preferring a man of pleasure to a man of probity upon that dangerous but too commonly received notion *that a reformed rake makes the best husband*"—a notion expressed in *Pamela*. There's nothing new here: we've seen plenty of novels where tyrannical parents try to force marriages on their offspring, and others (like Davys's *Accomplished Rake*) that warn girls against bad boys. In the postscript, Richardson admits he also had a religious agenda: the novel "is designed to inculcate upon the human mind, under the guise of an amusement, the great lessons of Christianity. . . ." He even uses that to justify what may strike some as a lack of poetic justice: unlike Job—with whom Clarissa increasingly identifies during the second half of the novel, even writing some "meditations" adapted from the biblical novella—Clarissa is not rewarded at the end, but instead dies, separated from her best friend Anna and still alienated from her unforgiving family. But in *Christian* terms, Richardson unctuously tweaks us in his postscript, dying young means early admission to heaven, without having to suffer through decades of disappointing life on earth. "And who that are in earnest in their profession of Christianity but will rather envy than regret the triumphant death of CLARISSA, whose piety from her early childhood; whose diffusive charity; whose steady virtue; whose Christian humility; whose forgiving spirit; whose meekness, whose resignation, HEAVEN *only* could reward?" By this logic, only an atheist would prefer a traditional happy ending.

Unless we're willing to classify and dismiss *Clarissa* as an extravagant example of 18th-century Christian devotional literature, we need to read it another way. On occasion I've quoted a few lines from Lawrence's *Studies in Classic American Literature* suggesting that many novels have "Two blankly opposing morals, the artist's and the tale's. Never trust the artist. Trust the tale. The proper function of a critic is to save the tale from the artist who created it" (2). To save *Clarissa* from Richardson the artist, if indeed he truly intended the novel to illustrate "the great lessons of Christianity," we must first point out that its promises of heavenly rewards

are as illusory as the promises of marriage used by rakes like Lovelace to lure naïve virgins into their clutches. Clarissa was home-schooled by two spiritual advisors, Dr. Lewin and Mrs. Norton, who brainwashed the girl with unrealistic Christian ideals that made her unequipped to live in the real world. Nowhere is this more apparent than during the notorious fire scene narrated in letter 225, in which Lovelace takes advantage of a fire accidentally set by a maid—which Clarissa goes to her grave convinced *he* set deliberately—to cop some feels of the frightened Clarissa "with nothing on but an under-petticoat, her lovely bosom half-open, and her feet just slipped into her shoes" (or "almost naked," as she later exaggerates to Anna). This sends her into a *psychotic* meltdown, far beyond how any normal woman would react, as Lovelace later complains: "Greater liberties have I taken with girls of character at a common romping bout, and all has been laughed off, and handkerchief and headcloths adjusted, and petticoats shaken to rights, in my presence" (244). Smollett was so struck by the ludicrousness of Clarissa's freakout that he later parodied the scene in his *Humphry Clinker*. Like Nick Carraway after that unpleasantness at West Egg, Clarissa expects people to be "at a sort of moral attention forever," and like that boy in David Foster Wallace's *Pale King* who is so good that nobody can stand him (§5), Clarissa is so Christian that she is impossible to be around; even her BFF Anna chides her for her "grave airs" (10), and Lovelace sadly wonders, "Did she never romp? Did she never from girlhood to now hoyden?" (201).

It's not until she leaves her provincial home and her shelf of theology books and is taken to London that she learns there's a difference between Christian theory and practice. Like Sarah Fielding's David Simple, she feels the two should be one, but Lovelace wryly notes "This dear lady is prodigious learned in *theories*, but as to *practices*, as to *experimentals*, must be, as you know from her tender years, a mere novice" (158.1). She admits this in a letter to Anna written about a month before her death: "Oh, my dear, 'tis a sad, a very sad world!—While under our parents' protecting wings, we know nothing at all of it. Book-learned and a scribbler, and looking at people as I saw them as visitors or visiting, I thought I knew a great deal of it. Pitiable ignorance!—Alas! I knew nothing at all!" (405). This epiphany comes too late, for she's too committed to Christian ideology to change, and in fact during her final months redoubles her Bible study and

slips into a kind of religious dementia. What's sad is that her unexamined conviction of the truth of Christian doctrine—which she foolishly believes was planted in her mind at birth by her god (185) and are "innate principles" (349), not social constructions—is simply wrong. There's no god, no heaven; she's been lied to. Before you decide to live or die by an ideology, you'd better be damned sure it's a valid one; as Montaigne said (regarding the religious persecutions of his day), "After all, it is putting one's conjectures at a rather high price to burn a man alive for them." Clarissa's Christian belief is a conjecture that she mistakes for a fact, and like a religious suicide-bomber, she destroys herself over that mistake. When Clarissa calls out for Jesus at her moment of death, the gullible girl has once again been tricked by a persuasive man into running away from home.

For Lovelace, his rape of Clarissa represents "the triumph of nature over principle" (371), an idea reinforced by his metaphoric association with various beasts of prey.[192] Though he is nominally a Christian and believes in an afterlife, he is comfortably at home in the real world in a way Clarissa could never be, though he too labors under an equally illusory ideology, that of the gentleman. Despite a rap sheet of rapes and seductions stretching back seven years, all involving lying and subterfuge, he regards himself as a gentleman and resents anyone who doesn't treat him as such. In *The Accomplished Rake*, Davys had called bullshit on these douchebags "with their fine speeches and filthy designs" (198), but while she let her rake off easy, Richardson sees to it that Lovelace dies for honoring "honor" in name only: as Morden lectures him, "the man who has shown so little of the *thing* honour to a defenceless, unprotected woman, ought not to stand so nicely upon the *empty name* of it . . ." (442). Lovelace feels honor-bound to accept Morden's challenge for a duel; he admits he is responsible for Clarissa's death, but he resents being treated as anything other than an honorable gentleman—yet another example of someone dying for an idiotic ideology.

The tale points to a different set of morals: That private property is "narrow selfishness," for "the world is but one great family" (8). That perceived duties to parents and siblings are merely "cradle-prejudices" (31), for "How much more binding and tender are the ties of pure friendship, and the union of like minds, than the ties of nature!" (359). That "none but very

generous and noble-minded people ought to be implicitly obeyed" (136), not simply anyone in a position of authority.[193] That 18th-century manners are a thin, ineffective veneer over a violent creation, and that, contrary to Anna's Christian assurance, "Heaven will seal [assent] to the black passions of its depraved creatures" (148). That matrimony "is the grave of love, because it allows the end of love" (326), and "that there is hardly one in ten of even tolerably happy marriages in which the wife keeps the hold in the *husband*'s affections which she has in the *lover*'s" (458). That polygamy makes more sense than monogamy (a point Richardson raised earlier in *Pamela*, in the sequel to *Pamela*, in *Sir Charles Grandison*, and in letters). "That every woman is a rake in her heart" (116, taken from Pope's "Of the Characters of Women"), and prefers bad boys to good guys; that "all women are cowards at bottom, only violent when they *may*" (289); that women are incapable of enduring friendship, and that "even women of sense are not to be trusted with power" (520); that women are bad spellers (529); that Englishmen raise women (as Anna fumes) as "fools and idiots in order to make us bear the yoke you lay upon our shoulders" (523). That it is more fun to read the letters of a rake than those of a prude—after a while, the reader responds to a new letter from Clarissa as to a bill in the mail—and that a rake shows more insight into behavior than a self-appointed teen moralist. That Clarissa and Anna are probably lesbians, though they don't go farther than despising men, expressing how much they love each other "as never woman loved another" (502), and alluding to the homoerotic biblical story of David and Jonathan (359). The artist's stated morals of *Clarissa*—parental flexibility with regard to marriage, and the avoidance of rakes—seem to be tubs tossed out to distract whales while the tale points elsewhere. The artist favors Clarissa, the tale prefers Lovelace.

The tale also tells us that rakes and novelists have much in common.[194] Each one of the following statements by Lovelace the seducer applies to Richardson the novelist:

> am I not bringing virtue to the touchstone with a view to exalt it, if it come out to be virtue? . . . And I will bring this charming creature to the strictest test that all the sex, who may be shown any passage in my letters . . . may see what they ought to be, what is expected from them; (110)

and I, loving narrative letter-writing above every other species of writing . . . (175)

Sally, a little devil [who works in the brothel], often reproaches me with the slowness of my proceedings. But in a play, does not the principal entertainment lie in the first four acts? Is not all in a manner over when you come to the fifth? And what a vulture of a man must be he who souses upon his prey, and in the same moment trusses and devours?

But to own the truth, I have overplotted myself. (175)

Since I must move *slow* in order to be *sure*, I have a charming contrivance or two in my head—even supposing she should get away—to bring her back again. (201)

(Within parenthesis let me tell thee that I have often thought that the little words in the republic of letters, like the little folks in a nation, are the most significant. The *trisyllables*, and the *rumblers* of syllables more than *three*, are but the good for little *magnates*). (211)

But in thy opinion [Belford/Richardson's critics], I suffer for that simplicity in my contrivances which is their principal excellence. No machinery[195] make I necessary. No unnatural flights aim I at. All pure nature, taking advantage of nature as nature tends; and so simple my devices that when they are known, thou, even thou, imaginest that thou couldst have thought of the same. (223)[196]

I love to write to the moment— (224)

I have abundance of matters preparative to my future proceedings to recount, in order to connect and render all intelligible. (232)

Now, Belford, for the narrative of narratives. I will continue it as I have opportunity, and that so dextrously that if I break off twenty times, thou shalt not discern where I piece my thread. (233)

I would give Mrs Moore and her a brief history of an affair which, as she said, bore the face of novelty, mystery, and surprise; (233)

> And what would there have been in it [Clarissa's seduction] of uncommon or rare had I not been so long about it? (246)
>
> Thou'lt observe, Belford, that though this was written afterwards, yet (as in other places) I write it as it was spoken and happened, as if I had retired to put down every sentence as spoken. I know thou likest this lively *present-tense* manner, as it is one of my peculiars. (256)
>
> If I give up my contrivances, my joy in stratagem, and plot, and invention, I shall be but a common man, such another dull heavy creature as thyself. (264)
>
> What, as I have often contemplated, is the enjoyment of the finest woman in the world to the contrivance, the bustle, the surprise, and at last the happy conclusion of a well-laid plot? (271)
>
> I have always told you the consequence of attending to the *minute* where art (or *imposture*, as the ill-mannered would call it) is designed. . . . (289)
>
> This, though written in character [code], is a very long letter, considering it is not a narrative one or a journal of proceedings, like some of my former, for such will unavoidably and naturally, as I may say, run into length. But I have so used myself to write a great deal of late that I know not how to help it. (294)
>
> I will take [Clarissa's] papers. And as no one can do her memory justice equal to myself, and I will not spare myself, who can better show the world what she was, and what a villain he that could use her ill? And the word shall also see what implacable and unworthy parents she had.
>
> All shall be set forth in words at length. No mincing of the matter. Names undisguised as well as facts. (497)
>
> Be sure to be very minute: for every trifling occurrence relating to those we value becomes interesting when we are at a distance from them. (530)
>
> Doubt not . . . that I shall give a good account of this affair. (535)

I've quoted so many of these statements because they highlight the text's intently self-conscious, metafictional nature—Clarissa makes almost as

many statements about *her* writing—and because they conveniently summarize what Richardson intended: via Lovelace, he identifies the plot and purpose of *Clarissa*, justifies the slowness and length of the work, differentiates his techniques from those of other novelists, praises its novelty and rarity, expresses his "joy in stratagem, and plot, and invention," anticipates and answers criticism, and boasts he has given "a good account of this affair." But of course Lovelace is not the only author-surrogate in the novel; Richardson lets him do his talking for him, but he positions Clarissa as the superior writer, and narrative control is as important and dramatic a conflict as sexual control in the novel. Lovelace has to struggle to dominate both Clarissa and *Clarissa*, and eventually loses control over both.

Clarissa controls the narrative for the first 30 letters—that is, for the first two months (and 100 pages) of the novel—but even after Lovelace's first letter (#31) she continues to dominate the narrative until he abducts her, when she has to cede partial control both of the narrative and her person to him, at which point his language flexes its muscles. (She's heard he is "a great plotter and a great writer" [4].) But beginning with letter 191 (May 19th), Loveless takes almost complete control of both the narrative and of Clarissa, writing the majority of the letters for the next five weeks (some 365 pages) until Clarissa escapes his clutches and finds her voice again (letter 295, June 28th). They return to sharing narrative control for the next two months, weighed in Clarissa's favor as Belford takes her side. Team Clarissa dominates the narrative thereafter; not only is her "narrative" (her view of events) supported by others like Belford and her cousin Morden, but even after her death her voice persists via several letters she prepared to be delivered posthumously, along with a lengthy narrative will. Near the end, Lovelace complains, "I know not what I write, nor what I would write" (463), and ceding defeat to Clarissa's superior narrative power, he exclaims, "What an army of texts has she drawn up in array against me . . . !" (530). This battle of the sexes is a battle of texts.[197]

Nowhere is this battle more effectively dramatized than in the letter Lovelace writes to Belford two days before he rapes his cowriter: he recounts a dream in which he murders Clarissa, because

> she was a thief, an impostor, as well as a tormentor. She had stolen my pen. While I was sullenly meditating, doubting as to my future measures, she stole it; and thus she wrote with it, in a hand exactly like my own, and would have faced me down that it was really my own handwriting. . . .
>
> Thus far had my *conscience* written with my pen, and see what a recreant she had made me!—I seized her by the throat—*There!—There*, I said, thou vile impertinent!—Take *that*, and *that!* (246)

It's deliberately, brilliantly vague whether he is assaulting her with his pen or his penis, which are symbolically equivalent: equally proud of his writing and sexual skills, Lovelace subconsciously reveals he's aware Clarissa threatens to deprive him of both due to her literary and moral superiority. He consciously downplays this fear for a while, couching it in literary terms of tales and plots: "the haughty beauty will not refuse me when her pride of being corporally inviolate is brought down, when she can tell no tales, . . . I'll teach the dear charming creature to emulate me in contrivance!—I'll teach her to weave webs and plots against her conqueror!" (256). During the height of their writing competition, they harshly critique each other's writing style: hers, Lovelace claims, shows "how pretty tinkling words run away with ears inclined to be musical!" (323), while she dismisses his as "libertine froth" (339). Lovelace calls her a poor plotter, "for plotting is not her talent" (321), but he gradually realizes that modern moral analysis is a superior literary mode to old-fashioned plots and stratagems—both his name and his plot devices are *so* 17th century. Lovelace also admits to Belford that, far from being the dashing hero of his libertine romance, he is the dastardly villain in her Christian homily, which all the other characters come to prefer over his narrative.

Richardson positions Clarissa as the better writer, but she pays a price: during one histrionic scene in the brothel, she threatens to kill herself with her *penknife* (281), and her frantic letter-writing during the last month of her life contributes to her death. She is a confident, poised stylist during most of the novel, with two fascinating exceptions: the first occurs when Clarissa learns she may have a rival for Lovelace's affections in the luscious person of Rosebud, a 17-year-old maid at the alehouse Lovelace frequents while watching for an opportunity to abduct Clarissa. Even though she

regards him as little better than a stalker at this early point, Clarissa loses her cool in response to Anna's letter about Rosebud. Italicizing Anna's descriptions, snapping out short phrases punctuated by dashes in place of her usual flowing, magniloquent style, hissing with catty sarcasm, this is one of the few places in the novel where Clarissa resembles a normal teenage girl:

> I long to hear the result of your intelligence. You shall *see* the simple creature, you tell me—Let me know what sort of a girl it is—a *sweet pretty girl*, you say—a *sweet* pretty *girl*, my dear!—They are sweet, pretty words from your pen. But are they *yours*, or *his*, of her?—If she be so simple, if she have ease and nature in her manner, in her speech, and warbles prettily her *wild notes* (how affectingly you mention this simple thing, my dear!), why, such a girl as that must engage such a profligate wretch, as now, indeed, I doubt this man is; accustomed, perhaps, to town-women, and their confident ways!—must *deeply*, and for a *long season*, engage him! Since, perhaps, when her innocence is departed, she will endeavour by art to supply the natural charms that engaged him. (71)

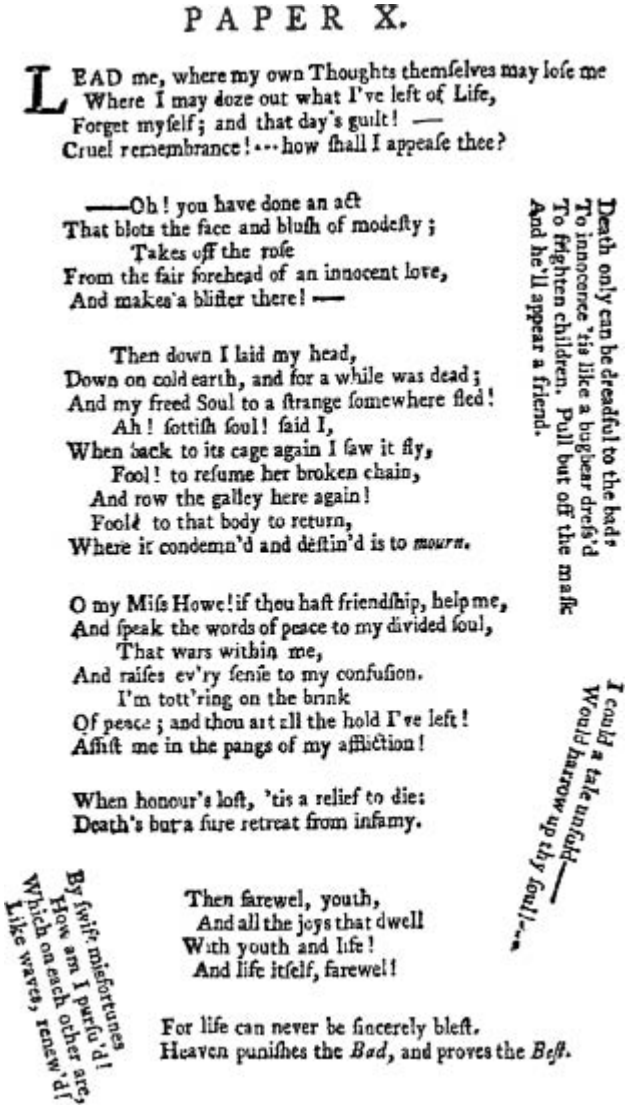
Meow! When she later learns Lovelace treats Rosebud right and even helps her marry her boyfriend, Clarissa resumes her usual barrister style (the one, you'll recall, Sir George Mackenzie recommended in his *Aretina*). The second and more eye-popping instance is after Clarissa is raped. Recovering from her drug overdose and realizing what Lovelace did to her while unconscious, Clarissa gets "to her pen and ink," but (as Lovelace tells Belford) "what she writes she tears, and throws the paper in fragments under the table, either as not knowing what she does, or disliking it" (261). He sends some of the scraps and fragments to Belford "for the novelty of thing," including the textual collage reproduced on the following page. Richardson typeset this himself as a visual representation of Clarissa's blown mind, and as Bruce Kawin notes, it "is as extraordinary as any of Sterne's black or blank pages" (239). Her narrative style, like her hymen and her self-esteem, is shattered, and she has a difficult time picking up the pieces. Temporarily deprived of her own voice, Clarissa assembles fragments from her favorite writers to speak for her: Otway (his play *Venice Preserved* is often mentioned in the novel), Dryden, Shakespeare, Cowley,

and, um, didactic poet Samuel Garth. (Clarissa has fusty literary tastes, naturally, and if she ever read a novel, it's not noted.) In Greek mythology, after Philomela is raped and her tongue torn out, she communicates her story by weaving it into a robe; Clarissa, whom Lovelace later compares to Philomela (325), communicates her woe by weaving texts together until she can regain her own voice. It's a startling, innovative use of printing technology on Richardson's part, as is the fold-out music score he included in the original edition to accompany a song Clarissa composes (letter 54, but reduced to one page and relegated to the back of the Penguin edition), as is Richardson's dramatic use of typography on the night of Clarissa's rape. Using two heavy lines, he cordons off the incident like a crime scene and slaps a temporary gag order on the text:

> The whole of this black transaction is given by the injured lady to Miss Howe, in her subsequent letters, dated Thursday July 6. To which the reader is referred.

It is Richardson's narrative strategies, ideological tensions, metafictional remarks, typographical innovations, and unexpected choices that make *Clarissa* interesting to some of us—not its Christian "sampler-doctrine" (294) or its insufferable, inimitable heroine. How daring of Richardson, for example, to follow Belford's brief note to Lovelace announcing Clarissa's death with a rambling letter by Lovelace's coarsest libertine buddy, Richard Mowbray; Lovelace "cannot bear to set pen to paper," which makes Mowbray wonder what the big deal is: "And what is there in one woman more than another, for matter of that?" (480). Knowing that most of his readers would be as heartsick as Lovelace at that point, Richardson took a gutsy chance by stomping that muddy footprint just there. How clever of him to have a semiliterate woman spell the rake's name "Luveless" (305). How sly of him to have a maid accidentally start a fire while reading a novel (Greene's *Pandoso*) and, *557 pages later*, pun on the danger of reading "inflaming novels and idle romances" (442).[198] How curious that Richardson would rail (via Lovelace) against an example of Christian kitsch in one letter (449) and then, 60 pages later, provide an even kitschier one when describing Clarissa's death. How prescient of Richardson to have

protofeminist Anna use pronouns in the nonsexist if stylistically awkward way that wouldn't become standard until the 1970s, as in "When a person gets a cold, he or she puzzles and studies how it began; how he—or she got it: and when that is accounted for, down he-she sits contented and lets it have its course . . ." (37). How LOL ironic to have hyperperfectionist Clarissa, of all people, say with a straight face, "I [am] not difficult to please" (155). How delightfully surprising, in a serious novel that is ultimately about the grim, sometimes lethal fact "we have all of us our inordinate passions to gratify" (275)—uncompromising virtue for Clarissa, a compromised Clarissa for Lovelace—that the latter's uncle nearly dies because of his inordinate passion for . . . lemonade.



PAPER X.

LEAD me, where my own Thoughts themſelves may loſe me
Where I may doze out what I've left of Life,
Forget myſelf; and that day's guilt! —
Cruel remembrance!···how ſhall I appeaſe thee?

——Oh! you have done an act
That blots the face and bluſh of modeſty;
Takes off the roſe
From the fair forehead of an innocent love,
And makes a blaſter there! —

Then down I laid my head,
Down on cold earth, and for a while was dead;
And my freed Soul to a ſtrange ſomewhere fled!
Ah! ſottiſh ſoul! ſaid I,
When back to its cage again I ſaw it fly,
Fool! to reſume her broken chain,
And row the galley here again!
Fool! to that body to return,
Where ſhe condemn'd and deſtin'd is to *mourn*.

O my Miſs Howe! if thou haſt friendſhip, help me,
And ſpeak the words of peace to my divided ſoul,
That wars within me,
And raiſes ev'ry ſenſe to my confuſion.
I'm tott'ring on the brink
Of peace; and thou art all the hold I've left!
Aſſiſt me in the pangs of my affliction!

When honour's loſt, 'tis a relief to die:
Death's but a ſure retreat from infamy.

Then farewel, youth,
And all the joys that dwell
With youth and life!
And life itſelf, farewel!

For life can never be ſincerely bleſt.
Heaven puniſhes the *Bad*, and proves the *Beſt*.

Death only can be dreadful to the bad:
To innocence 'tis like a bugbear dreſs'd
To frighten children. Pull but off the maſk
And he'll appear a friend.

I could a tale unfold—
Would harrow up thy ſoul!—

By ſwift misfortunes
How am I purſu'd!
Which on each other are,
Like waves, renew'd!

But for every nice touch, there's a clumsy stumble. Clarissa's family forbids her to communicate with the outside world but turn a blind eye to her solitary visits to a chicken coup on the edge of their estate (where Clarissa drops off and picks up letters from Anna and Lovelace); are we expected to believe they can't figure out how she continues to send and receive letters? Too often Richardson gives lame excuses to keep his characters apart so they can continue to write, ludicrously so in Anna's case; given everything the author tells us about this spirited, independent woman, are we to believe she wouldn't have found some way to visit her beloved friend during Clarissa's captivity and lingering death? (The excuses Richardson gives—sick mother, trip to the Isle of Wight—are utterly unconvincing: Anna would have stolen a horse and rode it hard and wet to London to rescue her girl.) It's equally unconvincing and contrary to Lovelace's obsessive character to believe he neglected Clarissa during her final months because he had to tend to his sick uncle (who survives past the end of the novel). During that period, Lovelace contemplates visiting her disguised as a pastor, around the same time the Harlowe family sends a pastor to Clarissa, with her cooperation. What wonderful possibilities for mistaken identities and cross-purposes that holds! But Richardson didn't pursue that promising plot twist, or simply forgot about it.[199] Many of the literary quotations are awkwardly introduced and feel phoned in: I'm not surprised to read in Ross's introduction that they stem not from Richardson's own reading (which was limited) but were "assembled from several handy anthologies such as Edward Bysshe's *Art of English Poetry* . . . or *The Beauties of the English Stage*" (18).

And are we really expected to believe that 18-year-old Clarissa has already written a critical monographs on plays (200)?[200] Are we to believe these characters have time to write *thousands* of words a day, in addition to making rough drafts, copies, and memoranda of their lengthy letters? Too often Richardson's characters explain things their correspondents would already know, admittedly so when they uses phrases like "I suppose I need not tell you . . ." (499), which is Richardson's clumsy way of supplying necessary information he can't otherwise figure out how to convey. The epistolary form is a test of an author's ingenuity, and too often Richardson cheats in this manner, or by resorting to explanatory footnotes and editorial

interventions, as he did in *Pamela*. He has his characters urge each other to be "very circumstantial and minute" (per his postscript), which certainly adds to the novel's realistic density, but this unrealistically entails giving them photographic/phonographic memories that defy belief. Even Richardson's technique of "writing to the moment," the "*present-tense* manner" of which he was so proud—and which does indeed give a fly-on-the-wall quality to the proceedings—is kind of silly: characters sometime act, then record their actions, then do something else, and then write about that, as though they were on Twitter. Waiting before dawn outside Clarissa's chicken coop, Lovelace chastises her for standing him up: "On one knee, kneeling with the other, I write!—My feet benumbed with midnight wanderings through the heaviest dews that ever fell, my wig and my linen dripping with the hoarfrost dissolving on them!—Day but just breaking—" (64.1), and later, in letter 231, Lovelace writes down his own conversation *as he's speaking*. Sometimes Richardson cheats by saying some characters take notes as they go along so that they can write up their accounts later, yet another roundabout way of dodging a technical challenge. Many of the letters are continuations of preceding ones, numbered as new letters (but mailed together) simply to disguise what are actually long chapters, another avoidance of the rigors of epistolary form. Richardson's characters repeat themselves too often, which even they acknowledge: "what can I write that I haven't already written?" writes Anna (37); "How often, my dearest aunt, must I repeat the same thing!" (45) says an exasperated Clarissa, no more exasperated than the reader who has to listen to characters ring "changes upon the same bells," as Clarissa puts it, "and neither receding nor advancing one tittle" (42). "More to the same purpose he said," Clarissa mercifully summarizes at one point (185), but too often we get that "more to the same purpose" in stupefying detail, endless reiterations of points already made, positions already stated, conflicts already at work, and sentiments already expressed. Among the latter, the gaggingly effusive, exponentially cloying praise heaped upon Clarissa is particularly tiresome, and totally unnecessary: Clarissa's good qualities speak for themselves, but here, as elsewhere in the novel, Richardson can't resist prompting the reader to respond as he wishes—leading the witness, as lawyers call it. This tendency betrays Richardson's lack of confidence in both his material and in his readers: like an uncertain TV producer who feels compelled to add a

canned laugh track to prompt the audience, Richardson repeatedly tells us how we should respond to Clarissa/*Clarissa*, supplies trainer-wheel footnotes to remind us where certain things were said before, and explains things the intelligent reader can surmise on her own. *Clarissa* explains it all, instead of allowing us to explain it to ourselves.

And then, of course, there's the excessive length—which, again, even the characters complain about: "our story is too long," says Lovelace (233), seconded by Clarissa, who admits her story "is too long" (235), perhaps the only point on which he, she, and we can agree. The fictional editor (Belford, it's implied) omits some letters because "this collection is run to an undesirable length" (note preceding letter 470)[201] but he includes a lengthy one by Morden who assumes his "doleful prolixity will not be disagreeable" (500). Think again, Colonel. It's not as though Richardson is dealing with a wide variety of incidents occurring over decades (as in *In Search of Lost Time* or *Infinite Jest*) or with profound, philosophical issues that require extensive elaboration (as in *The Man without Qualities* or *The Recognitions*). *Clarissa* moves at the same glacial pace as *A Dream of Red Mansions*, coincidentally written at the same time halfway around the world, but without the Chinese novel's larger cast and longer timespan. Nor do any of the authors of these meganovels *apologize* for their length, as Richardson does repeatedly, self-defensively, another indication of a lack of confidence in his material. Unlike the confident Fielding, the obsequious Richardson is too concerned with imposing on his predominantly female audience, or with offending them—which is one reason why he unrealistically insists that none of his libertines are atheists or even joke about religion, or ever use obscene language.

I'm going on at Richardsonian length about this white elephant of a novel only because some critics overpraise *Clarissa* as "the eighteenth-century's supreme fictional masterpiece."[202] Despite many interesting features, it doesn't deserve that distinction. It has too many technical flaws, too many clumsy narrative contortions, too much repetition, too much filler, too much conventional thinking—for every subversive suggestion there are a dozen brainless bromides—too much womanish fuss over delicacy and punctiliousness, and offers too few returns on the enormous investment of time and attention this massive novel demands. Some readers begin

Clarissa without finishing it, and I suspect many who do finish it, like Voltaire, "would not want to be condemned to reread that English novel" (*Selected Letters*, 206).

One couldn't ask for a better palate cleanser than *The Adventures of Roderick Random* (1748), the first novel by the third major English (Scots, actually) novelist to emerge in the 1740s, Tobias Smollett (1721–71). It is rough and wild where *Clarissa* is refined and cerebral, plays out in the wide world rather than inside rooms, and is convincingly realistic rather than artificially so. (Chamberpots, for example, are never mentioned in Richardson, but they are used and often upended on people in Smollett.) As Fielding did in *Joseph Andrews*, Smollett opens with a preface denouncing unrealistic romances and championing the more realistic (and funnier) novels of Cervantes and especially Lesage, whose *Gil Blas* he was translating, and which supplied the basic plan for his first novel. And as Richardson did in his prefaces, Smollett states his intentions: to generate indignation "against the sordid and vicious disposition of the world" and "to represent modest merit struggling with every difficulty to which a friendless orphan is exposed, from his own want of experience as well as from the selfishness, envy, malice, and base indifference of mankind."[203] The friendless orphan is a redheaded Scot born into a family torn apart by a cold-hearted grandfather, whose anger at the clandestine marriage of Roderick's father drives the boy's mother into an early grave and his father into exile, leaving the lad to fend for himself. He manages to scrape together a good education (he quotes Horace in Latin throughout the novel) and some knowledge of medicine, but when he leaves Scotland for London to make a living, he is stymied at every step by what he variously calls "the artifice and wickedness of mankind" and "the knavery and selfishness of mankind" (15, 54). Within 48 hours of arriving in London, he and his traveling companion are "jeered, reproached, buffetted, pissed upon, and at last stript of our money" (15), and that's just for starters: over the next few years (roughly 1739 to 1743) he endures a relentless number of disasters and disappointments, is victimized by scoundrels high and low, is press-ganged into a ship and sent to the West Indies to fight the Spaniards, thrown

in jail, and almost beaten to death on several occasions, all usually through no fault of his own. Roderick admits his hair-trigger temper and thirst for revenge cause problems, but he is more sinned against than sinning. About halfway through the novel, Roderick encounters a textbook heroine with the unlikely name Narcissa (Smollett's tip of the hat to the romance genre), and parts of the second half of the novel concern his frustrated courtship of this amiable beauty. Unlike the protagonists of many picaresque novels (with which *Roderick Random* has only a distant relation), Roderick never becomes one of the selfish, envious, malicious members of mankind, and for that reason, he is rewarded at the end with financial and amorous success.

There's nothing interesting about the novel's structure, a linear, episodic narrative beginning "I was born . . ." and ending with his marriage to the girl of his dreams, interrupted only by two inset stories fore and aft. A few subtle references to Ulysses and to Petronius suggest Smollett may have had the *Odyssey* partly in mind as a structural pattern as Roderick travels the world from Scotland to England to the West Indies to France to South America to England and finally back home to Scotland. The language, on the other hand, is interesting for its departures from standard English. (And as in Richardson and Sarah Fielding, the text is slashed with dashes.) Smollett gives phonetic renderings of people speaking in regional dialect and/or with heavy accents (Welsh, French), and in one case reproduces a poorly spelled love-letter from a pretentious woman living in "Vinegar-yard Droory lane" (i.e., Vine Garden Yard, Drury Lane) that anticipates the punning language of *Finnegans Wake*:

> Dire creatur,
>
> As you are the animable hopjack of my contempleshons, your aydear is constantanously skimming before my kimmerical fansie, when morfeus sheds illeusinary puppies upon the I's of dreeming mortels; and when lustroos febus shines from his kotidian throne: Wheerpon, I shall consceif old whorie time has lost his pinners, as also cubit his harrows, until thou enjoy sweet slumbrs in the lovesick harrums of thy faithful to commend 'till death. (16)

Smollett also drew upon his background as a ship's doctor to introduce medical terminology into his narrative and especially nautical terms, literally during Roderick's ocean voyages and metaphorically in the language of his sea-dog uncle. The specialized vocabulary adds to the novel's realism, as does Smollett's treatment of sex. Though hardly a rake, Roderick doesn't pass up any opportunity for coitus on the rare occasions it's available, even after he has committed to Narcissa. Traveling in France with a lascivious priest, he accepts a farm-girl's offer of sex one night, but fantasizes he's with Narcissa: "the idea of that lovely charmer rather increased rather than allayed the ferment of my spirits" (42). Roderick is neither the first nor last man in history to think of one woman while having sex with another, but he's probably the first in fiction to admit doing so. Smollett is surprisingly candid about sexual matters; when Roderick is later reunited with Narcissa, she can tell he's sexually aroused: "As my first transport abated, my passion grew turbulent and unruly. I was giddy with standing on the brink of bliss, and all my virtue and philosophy were scarce sufficient to restrain the inordinate sallies of desire.—Narcissa perceived the conflict within me, and with her usual dignity of prudence, called off my imagination from the object in view . . . (425)—that is, herself, and she smoothly changes the subject (rather than throw a fit of hysterics, like Clarissa). Nor does Smollett draw a veil over the wedding night when, as Roderick unabashedly tells us, "no longer able to restrain my impatience, I broke from the company, burst into her chamber, pushed out her confidante, locked the door, and found her—O heav'n and earth! a feast a thousand times more delicious than my most sanguine hope presaged!" (68).

Like Richardson's and both Fieldings' first novels, Smollett's first isn't his best, though it became a best-seller: it relies too much on extraordinarily coincidental meetings, so much so that, toward the end, the reader can recognize figures from Roderick's past before he can. One of the two interpolated stories is a self-indulgent account of a writer's troubles getting a play produced, based on Smollett's own experiences with his tragedy, *The Regicide*; betraying guilt, Smollett has the playwright admit "I ought to crave pardon for this tedious narration of trivial circumstances, which, however interesting they may be to me, must certainly be very dry and insipid to the ear of one unconcerned in the affair" (63)—yet he continuous for another four pages. The novel's feel-good ending distributes poetic

justice too neatly for an otherwise grimly realistic novel. The characters tend to be caricatures, signaled by their comic tag-names (a coffeehouse wit named Banter, a coquette named Goosetrap, a homosexual named Simper, a rogue named Slyboot, etc.), though Smollett's often grotesque physical descriptions of them are a delight (and influenced Dickens, who mentions *Roderick Random* in *David Copperfield*). But such descriptions, the gritty renditions of life at sea and in distress, the colorful cast of characters, the sexual candor (including regarding homosexuality, though Roderick is a homophobe), the nonstop action, and the variety of incident as Roderick randomly ricochets through life like the tennis ball his mother dreamed about at his birth encourage us to overlook its maiden-voyage yaws and to react as one character does to the story of Roderick's life: "During the recital, my friend was strongly affected, according to the various situations described: He started with surprize, glowed with indignation, gaped with curiosity, smiled with pleasure, trembled with fear, and wept with sorrow, as the vicissitudes of my life inspired these different passions" (44). We'll deal with his better novels anon.[204]

A friend of Smollett's named John Cleland (1710–89) pushed sexual realism even farther in *Memoirs of a Woman Pleasure*, aka *Fanny Hill* (1748–49).[205] Riding the tail end of the anti-*Pamela* trend, Cleland revised a manuscript he had apparently begun when he was around 20 to redefine "virtue" in an unmarried woman as a matter of character (integrity, honesty, discipline) rather than the presence of a hymen, which Fanny dismisses as a "trinket," a "little maiden-toy," a "bauble" (23, 30, 32), thus breaking with Richardson and generations of romance novelists. And while *Fanny Hill* is primarily erotica written to raise cash to release Cleland from debtor's prison, it is secondarily "an experiment," as Patsy Fowler claims, "an attempt to explore ways in which the pornographic and/or erotic can be incorporated into novel form."[206] (Most British porn before *Fanny Hill* took the form of dialogues, ballads, mock epics, or allegories like Cotton's *Erotopolis*.) Whereas Richardson and Fielding boasted of "a new species of writing," Cleland offers "a new species of titillation" (152).

The erotic element is a positive twist on an old story: at age 15, newly orphaned Frances Hill travels from Liverpool to London to become a servant and perhaps even marry her master (as Pamela did, whom Cleland

alludes to via *Shamela*). Like Moll Hackabout in *A Harlot's Progress*, Fanny is quickly scooped up by a bawd named Mrs. Brown, who preps her for a whore life's by allowing a middle-aged lesbian named Phoebe to teach Fanny about sex by sharing her bed, showing her how to masturbate, and joining her in spying on whorehouse transactions. (There are peephole scenes throughout the novel; the reader is likewise a voyeur, right behind Fanny.) Her first male customer is a decrepit man in his sixties who barely manages to ejaculate on her clothes, but before Fanny faces her second customer she meets and runs away with a handsome young man named Charles, her first heterosexual partner. He sets her up in an apartment house managed by another bawd named Mrs. Jones, and all is well for 11 months until Charles is forced out of the country by his tyrannical father. Fanny spends the next eight months as the mistress of another man, until she is caught in the act with his huge-membered servant (whom she seduced in revenge for her master's infidelity, not from lust). She then becomes a courtesan at a high-class bordello managed by Mrs. Cole, staffed by three other girls as young and beautiful as she is, where Fanny services a half-dozen men over the next year or so, ranging from nice young aristocrats with simple urges to those with more "arbitrary tastes," as Mrs. Cole puts it (sado-masochism, role-playing, even a gent who simply likes to comb and play with Fanny's auburn hair), all of which she defends: "she considered pleasure of one sort or other as the universal port of destination, and every wind that blew thither a good one, provided it blew nobody any harm" (144). Fanny makes enough money to retire at age 18, but almost immediately becomes the mistress of another man in his sixties, an admirable "rational pleasurist" who teaches her "to be sensible that the pleasures of the mind were superior to those of the body" (175). She stays with him until he dies eight months later and leaves her his fortune; shortly after, Fanny runs in to her first love Charles, lately returned to England, and after some vigorous makeup sex she surrenders her hand and fortune to become his bride. He forgives the sexual adventures she had while he was away, perhaps a final poke at Richardson's Pamela: if she can forgive and marry a kidnapping rapist, then Charles can forgive and marry a whore.

Like its protagonist, *Fanny Hill* has a shapely, expressive form, which is the first thing that elevates the novel from pornography to literature. The novel consists of two long letters addressed to an unnamed woman, written

by Fanny much later in life, apparently after menopause, when "all the tyranny of the passions is fully over, and [when] my veins roll no longer but a cold tranquil stream" (42). That temporal distance should put us on guard: this memoir can't be a realistic account of events that happened 30 years ago (including a few scenes at which Fanny wasn't even present), but a soft-focus recreation, which renders questions about how realistic it is rather academic.[207] It's certainly not the "Truth! stark naked truth" Fanny promises on the first page, but Art! sexily dressed art. The older writer relies on symmetry to shape her narrative: note from the plot summary above the contrasting sickly/healthy 60-year-olds at the beginning and end, the bad/good bawds, and Charles's position as her first and last heterosexual lover. In fact the form implies another coupling: just as an older woman first titillated Fanny, the older Fanny titillates another woman by deliberately dressing up her account of her wonder years, airbrushing away the sordidness and prettifying the highlights by way of metaphoric language (she avoids common obscenities and smutty slang), which she needlessly apologizes for near the end: "At the same time, allow me to place you here an excuse I am conscious of owing you, for having perhaps too much affected the figurative style; though surely it can pass nowhere more allowably than in a subject which is so properly the province of poetry, nay! is poetry itself, pregnant with every flower of imagination, and loving metaphors, even were not the natural expressions, for respects of fashion and sound, necessarily forbid it" (171). Fanny is also titillating herself: during her description of her reunion sex with Charles, she switches from past tense to Richardson's "*present-tense* manner" as she remembers/recreates the moment he entered her: "I see! I feel! the delicious velvet tip!—he enters might and main with—oh!—my pen drops from me here in the ecstasy now present to my faithful memory!" (183). If the pen is a penis in *Clarissa*, in Fanny's hands it's a dildo.[208]

Possessing "an ingenious way of relating matters" (27), Fanny flaunts her linguistic talents by weaving many patterns of imagery throughout her narrative, beginning with the rather obvious one of comparing her teenage self to a ship tossed on the ocean on the first page, "adrift" in the middle (86), and finally "got snug into port" upon marrying Charles. (The entire novel is awash with nautical imagery.) Less obvious, especially to modern

readers, is Fanny's use of the human-machine imagery of French philosopher Julien Offray de La Mettrie; in his book *Machine Man* (*L'Homme machine*, 1747), he rejected the theological notion of a sinful body yoked to an immortal soul, and instead regarded the whole person as a soft machine, fully functional *only* when lubricated by sexuality and the imagination. Fanny frequently calls the phallus a "machine," and sexual response "mechanical," but La Mettrie did not mean these terms to be dehumanizing but *re*humanzing, signifying a recovery of animal instincts, a materialistic recognition of how the mind and body actually work together (per modern physiology) as opposed to the traditional mind–body dichotomy. The concept is too complicated to go into here, but critic Leo Braudy, who does go into it in an essay entitled "*Fanny Hill* and Materialism," gives enough convincing evidence of Cleland's use of La Mettrie's book to justify his claim that, among other things, *Fanny Hill* "appears to be a detailed polemic in support of some of the most advanced philosophic doctrines of its time" (36).[209]

The deeper the reader plunges into *Fanny Hill*, the greater the returns. Fanny critiques capitalist practices by contrasting the managerial styles of two of the bawds, Mrs. Jones and Mrs. Cole. The former "had no nature, nor indeed any passion but that of money," and even *sells* her 17-year-old daughter to a customer. "Indifferent then by nature or constitution to every other pleasure but that of increasing the lump, . . . that of the profit created" (51–52, 66), she is contrasted to Mrs. Cole, "who contented herself with a moderate living profit" (88), doesn't cheat her employees or her customers, and who in fact emerges as the most moral, conscientious character in the novel. Even in the skin trade, there are good and bad business practices, and Cleland not only implies that an honest bawd is morally superior to a dishonest banker, but also shows that capitalism does not have to be exploitative.

Like the brothel customers who strip Fanny and examine her from every angle, critics have poked and prodded *Fanny Hill* from many lit-theory angles ever since she became legal in the 1960s, though the older perception of it as pornography continues to bar it from many literary histories of the period. It may not be great literature—the second half, like most porn novels, consists mostly of one sex scene after another (many

starring Mrs. Cole's other girls), increasing in kinkiness until Fanny witnesses a homosexual coupling, much to her disgust—but it is a smart, subversive challenge to the conventionally moralistic novels of the time and exhibits a healthy attitude toward sex that remains radical to this day. What Fowler describes as Cleland's experiment is quite successful, but as Fanny notes on the last page, "The experiment, you will cry, is dangerous. True, in a fool; but are fools worth the least attention to?" (188). Unfortunately, fools are in charge of public morality, and they arrested Cleland and his publisher later in 1749 and outlawed *Fanny Hill*, which didn't prevent it from becoming the best-selling erotic novel in Western culture.

Another sexually explicit novel of 1749 that was reprinted in the 1960s after censorship relaxed its sphincter is the anonymous *History of the Human Heart*, retitled *Memoirs of a Man of Pleasure* in 1968 to mirror *Fanny Hill*'s original title. But anyone who picked up that paperback expecting something similar was probably disappointed, for *The History of the Human Heart* is a raffish novel of learned wit closer to *Tristram Shandy* than to *Fanny Hill*. It's essentially a rake's progress featuring a coxcomb named Camillo from conception to around age 20, but it has the formal features of a Scriblerus Club production. In what amounts to an extended joke justifying authorial omniscience, the novel begins with a 12-page introduction in which the Welsh narrator claims to have inherited the gift of "second sight" (the ability to view future events), which he augments later with the ability to see into the past, the dying gift of an Italian Rosicrucian he befriends. Failing as a fortune-teller, he decides to turn author, and learning from a bookseller that scandalous memoirs are popular, he spots Camillo in a coffee-house, looks into his past, and concludes "the history of him would be entertaining."[210] Anticipating modern audience-testing, he reads his first draft to his landlady, revises the parts that seem to bore her, and then shares the manuscript with a Martinus Scriblerus-type pedant, who convinces him that the bawdy story needs some "notes, moral, historical, and critical," for "in the history of Camillo," the author has "traced every event from its natural source in the soul, and by that means discovered the various surprising effects of the passions, habits, and affections of the human heart, in a manner quite new" (11).

Well, not quite *that* new: like Dunton's *Voyage round the World*, the narrator begins *ab ovo* on the day Camillo was conceived—"the 14th of August, 1685, a year memorable for the defeat of the Monmouth Rebellion" (15)—starting when he was still semen "in his father's custody." The narrator devotes the next eight pages to Camillo's prenatal adventures as an animalcule, supplemented by two footnote-essays on obstetrics that the author plagiarized from Ephraim Chambers's famous *Cyclopædia* (1728), the same source Sterne drew upon for *his* descriptions of Tristram Shandy's embryonic days.[211] Per the old belief that a pregnant woman transmits psychological qualities to her fetus, unborn Camillo develops timidity after his mother watches the execution of the Duke of Monmouth, and develops an obsession with vulvae after his mother looks longingly on that of a bed companion. The latter manifests itself as early as age 10, when Camillo looks up the skirt of his cherry-picking sister, and then at age 13 when he views and attempts to enter that of his cousin Maria, bloodying his penis somehow during a failed fornication, which inspires a three-page footnote on the properties of the hymen, supported with anthropological data from Peru and "the Indian nations of Carolina" (46n).

At age 17, Camillo leaves for London to begin a grand tour of Europe, but instead his lascivious "governor" leads him on a grand tour of London's brothels, including a raunchy strip club where Camillo watches a troupe of "posture girls" disrobe, climb atop a table, and assume obscene postures for their male customers, but nothing more. As Camillo gawks at the vulvae on view, that of one of the girls stands out: "The throne of love was covered with jet-black hair at least a quarter of a yard long, which she artfully spread asunder to display the entrance into the magic grotto" (131). One of them, "who seemed to be a girl of uncommon genius" (and perhaps the one with the uncommon pubic locks), tells the story of how she became a stripper, but insists she remains a virtuous person, for she doesn't have sex with her customers. As in *Fanny Hill*, virtue is redefined here as integrity and self-respect, and the fact she makes a living posing in the nude is irrelevant. She stands (or undulates) in marked contrast to the novel's other (clothed) women, most of whom are respectable on the outside but dissolute within; as Vivien Jones notes, the posture girl "makes a clear distinction between a moral self and the performing body. . . . The rakes respect the

girl's professional autonomy, and leave her to look for conventional prostitutes" (138–39). Camillo pursues various intrigues over the next few years, often involving masquerades and disguises, to which the annotator adds humorless, essayistic footnotes on philosophical and moral issues raised by Camillo's hare-brained skirt-chasing.[212] Near the end, Camillo reunites with his cousin Maria, now married, though that doesn't prevent them from finally consummating their earlier love; but just when the author seems to be leading to a sentimental conclusion, we're told Maria gets syphilis from her childhood admirer, which she passes on to her husband. Mocking those novels in which women marry former rakes, the author concludes instead with a scene in which a crossdressing woman whom Camillo had seduced and abandoned earlier tricks him into marrying her.

Like Cleland, the erudite author often makes what appear to be allusions to La Mattrie's *Machine Man* and dares to explore moral issues in what most would consider an immoral format. In this regard, both *Fanny Hill* and *The History of the Human Heart* resemble the French libertine novels of the 1740s by Crébillon, Duclos, d'Argens, and Diderot. Of the two English novels, *The History of the Human Heart* contains more sexual realism, though far fewer sex scenes, but it fell between the stools of reader expectations—too literary for the porn crowd, too explicit for the literati—and consequently, unlike its unforgettable posture girl, it never received the respect it deserves.

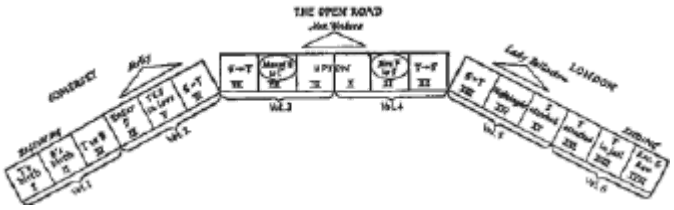
The greatest English novel of the 1740s, and one of the greatest of all time, is *The History of Tom Jones, a Foundling* (1749). Fielding followed *Joseph Andrews* with two short novels published in 1743—a one-note satire on "greatness" entitled *Jonathan Wild* and a visionary *Journey from This World to the Next*—and even wrote a novelette about a lesbian transvestite called *The Female Heart* (1746). But with *Tom Jones* he set out to write the definitive "comic epic in prose," or as he calls it here, a "heroic, historical, prosaic poem" (4.1). It's important to take Fielding at his word: *Tom Jones* is a comic epic in the tradition of Butler's *Hudibras* (which is cited several times) and the hypothetical *Margites* mentioned in *Joseph Andrews,* not a realistic novel in the tradition of *Moll Flanders* or *Roderick Random*. It has realistic elements, to be sure, but unless one grasps that Fielding is updating the old genre of mock epic, not contributing to the newfangled one of the

realist novel, one is liable to misjudge and denigrate its events as "the manipulated sequences of literature rather than the ordinary processes of life . . . somewhat at variance both with the dictates of formal realism and with the life of his time" (Watt, 253). *Tom Jones* is a work of art, not a slice of life, and Fielding's "manipulation" of literary topoi is what makes it a masterpiece.

In the previous chapter, I described Li Ruzhen's *Flowers in the Mirror* as "a farewell party for the classic Chinese novel, one final blow-out commemorating all its characteristic features," and that's how *Tom Jones* can be read. Its story elements are not original but recapitulate those from classic Western literature: like Oedipus, Tom Jones is a foundling, and later will be told that he slept with this mother; like Amadis de Gaul, he is an upper-class bastard; like Adam in the beginning of Genesis, he is expelled from paradise by his adoptive father—Thomas *Allworthy* of *Paradise* Hall (Fielding isn't subtle)—and like Esau later in Genesis, he has a sneaky brother named Blifil who tries to deprive him of his heritage; like Ulysses, Jones is a wanderer (the title page contains a quote from Homer's *Odyssey* that translates "he saw the customs of many men"), and again like Oedipus and generations of later philosophical seekers, Jones' ultimate goal is Western wisdom, which is the literal meaning of the name Sophia Western, the girl he joneses for; like Don Quixote, he has a comic sidekick (a man named Partridge who is said to be his father) and attends a puppet show; like Destiny in Scarron's *Comic Novel* (a *major* influence), Jones gets into embarrassing situations in inns; like the hero of La Calprenède's *Cassandra*, his excessive praise of Sophia "would have become the mouth of Oroondates himself" (16.9); and like thousands of couples in thousands of novels from Heliodorus's *Ethiopian Story* on, Jones and Sophia face the usual hazards (perceived class differences, tyrannical fathers, romantic misunderstandings, rivals and enemies), which will keep things interesting until the eventual marriage at the end. Though the bulk of the novel is set in 1745 and refers to current events, Fielding was less interested in depicting "the ordinary processes of life" than in constructing an interactive theme park devoted to the *extra*ordinary plots, characters, and themes of Western literature.

Tom Jones reads like a rambling tale with self-indulgent digressions until one reaches the end and realizes how tightly constructed the novel is. Critic

Frederick W. Hilles once drafted this helpful blueprint for Fielding's theme park:[213]



The first edition of *Tom Jones* was issued in six small volumes that drew attention to its structure in a way that modern one-volume editions don't. Note how the novel is bookended by the story of Jones's birth: book 1 gives out the false account that he is the by-blow of a local girl named Jenny Jones and his future companion, Mr. Partridge, while in the final book we are given the true explanation. Note the mathematical placement of the three women who temporarily seduce Jones away from Sophia. (And it's important to note that he's not a rake, just a normal guy who can't say no when a woman throws herself at him; as he tells Sophia near the end, "The delicacy of your sex cannot conceive the grossness of ours, nor how little one sort of amour has to do with the heart" [18.12].) Note the balanced placement of the two interpolated tales (inserted per romance-genre convention): the first is related by a disappointed hermit called "The Man of the Hill" to Jones, the second by a disappointed wife named Mrs. Fitzpatrick to Sophia, both tales intended to warn the youngsters of the disappointments ahead in the adult world. Note the central location of the farcical events at the inn at Upton, where Sophia learns that Jones is in bed with another woman (his alleged mother), the central betrayal that delays their eventual union. Note the precise mirror-imaging of certain events, such as Sophia's pursuit of Jones in book 7 and Jones's pursuit of her in book 12. Real life doesn't have this high degree of organization, but literature does, and as Fielding manipulates most of literature's topoi into one ingenious masterplot, he also gives a master-class demonstration of how to write a novel worthy of the name literature.

For many readers, the least appealing parts of *Tom Jones* are the prefatory chapters to each of its 18 books. "Skip the first chapter of each book during your first read," one yahoo on Amazon.com adviced, "it probably won't be on the test and it's always just Henry's latest blog on his most recent rant."

But a recognition of their role is essential to a full understanding of Fielding's purpose and the historical significance of *Tom Jones*. Like many novelists of the early modern period, Fielding frequently cites Horace's *Ars Poetica*; just as the Roman poet updated the Greek Aristotle's *Poetics* for his age, Fielding is updating Horace for the 18th century, a time when the novel was still working its way up from lowbrow entertainment to highbrow art. In 1934, Richard Blackmur assembled the 18 prefaces Henry James wrote for the New York Edition of his collected fiction and published them as a book entitled *The Art of the Novel*; the 18 prefaces in *Tom Jones* could be published together under the same title. In them Fielding not only explains what he's doing in his novel and why, but also provides an *Ars Poetica* for future novelists and, just as important, for readers of novels.

He begins by explaining there are two types of authors—those who write for themselves (and hope others will appreciate them), and those who write for others—and that the excellence of a novel "consists less in the subject than in the author's skill in well dressing it up" (1.1). He goes on to insist novelists can make up their own rules, especially when (like Fielding) they are founding "a new province of writing" (2.1); to insist on reader participation, filling in those things the author shouldn't have to explain: he gives two examples for "readers of the lowest class. Much higher and harder exercises of judgment and penetration may reasonably be expected from the upper graduates in criticism" (3.1); to insist "every book ought to be read with the same spirit, and in the same manner, as it is writ," and that "similes, descriptions, and other kind of poetical embellishments" are useful to refresh the mind and alert the reader to the entrance of major characters (4.1); to argue that the "dogmatical rules" of old-fashioned critics can be ignored by the modern novelist, because over time, "The laws of writing were no longer founded on the practice of the author, but on the dictates of the critic. . . . For these critics, being men of shallow capacities, very easily mistook mere form for substance. They acted as a judge would who should adhere to the lifeless letter of the law, and reject the spirit" (5.1);[214] to suggest that if the reader, like some philosophers, doesn't believe in love, then you should stop here rather "than to throw away any more of your time in reading what you can neither taste not comprehend" (6.1); that the reading public is like a theater audience in an 18th-century playhouse—the

rabble up in the gallery, the educated in the pit below, and the inattentive elite in the private boxes—and that one shouldn't condemn a play (or novel) for one bad scene or one miscast character (7.1); that novelists should avoid the marvelous and keep within "the bounds of probability"—though that doesn't mean "his characters or his incidents should be trite, common, or vulgar"—and that characters should remain consistent (8.1); and he insists that only those capable of writing reflective, learned prefaces like these can produce "true and genuine" novels, while those who can only write the narrative parts of novels are peddling what is "false and counterfeit," and are the ones who have given novels a bad name. The true novelist needs to possess genius, both book smarts and street smarts, and empathy (9.1).

At the halfway point of the novel, Fielding warns readers and critics "not too hastily to condemn any of the incidents in this our history as impertinent and foreign to our main design because thou dost not *immediately* conceive in what manner such incident may conduce to that design" (my italics), nor "to condemn a character as a bad one because it is not a perfectly good one." Surely alluding to *Clarissa* (some of which Fielding read in manuscript), he goes on to say, "If thou dost delight in these models of perfection, there are books enow written to gratify thy taste" (10.1).[215] He chastises snarky book reviewers, especially those who slander and insult an author (11.1); discusses literary allusions versus plagiarism (12.1); playfully evokes the help of the muses for the final 6 books of his novel and reiterates the qualifications of a true novelist, especially a wide knowledge of human nature (13.1); expands on the novelist's need for learning, not just genius and style (14.1); argues that taking the path of virtue is not, contrary to most teachings and novels, necessarily the "road to happiness" (15.1); enumerates the "emoluments" of prefaces, like these (16.1); elicits sympathy for the challenge novelists face resolving narrative complications, especially since they lack the advantage ancient writers had of deus ex machina solutions (17.1); and explains the need for the novelist to stick to "plain narrative" and to avoid "ludicrous observations" when writing the final chapters of a novel (18.1).

These prefaces suggest that for select readers—those in the pit, not in the gallery or boxes—the real protagonist is not Tom Jones but Henry Fielding. This is especially apparent in the preface to book 17, when a concatenation

of catastrophes has landed Jones in prison and the narrator pretends to sweat at the mess he's created. Those in the peanut gallery wonder how Jones will get out, while those of us in the pit wonder how *the author* will get him out, never losing sight of the puppet-master manipulating the show. The resolution of the masterful plot is rightly heralded as one of the greatest feats in narrativity, making Fielding the true hero of this history: Jones is merely the eye-candy assistant a magician employs to distract us while he works his magic. The handsome foundling is a rather bland romantic hero—aside from his sexual imprudence, he's "too good," as a minor character tells him near the end (18.11)—and Sophia Western is merely a paper doll cut from the same pattern-book as earlier romantic heroines. Her fox-hunting father is a riot, but Allworthy is also a little too good to be true. Partridge is no Sancho Panza, and the rest of the large cast are stage-types rather than rounded characters (which is fine for a mock epic). The narrator is the one who steals the show, and he doesn't confine himself to those prefatory chapters. Like a magician talking an audience through the performance of a trick, the narrator addresses the reader throughout the novel, sometimes chummily:

> Reader, take care, I have unadvisedly led thee to the top of as high a hill as Mr. Allworthy's, and how to get thee down without breaking thy neck, I do not well know. However, let us e'en venture to slide down together, for Miss Bridget rings her bell, and Mr. Allworthy is summoned to breakfast, where I must attend and, if you please, shall be glad of your company. (1.4)

sometimes apologetically:

> Before I proceed farther, I shall beg leave to obviate some misconstructions into which the zeal of some few readers may have led them, for I would not willingly give offence to any, especially to men who are warm in the cause of virtue or religion. (3.4)[216]

sometimes belligerently:

> For the reader is greatly mistaken if he imagines that [Parson] Thwackum appeared to Mr. Allworthy in the same light as he doth to him in this history; and he is much deceived if he imagines that the most intimate acquaintance which he himself could have had with that divine would have informed him of those things which we, from our inspiration, are enabled to open and discover. Of readers who from such conceits as these condemn the wisdom or penetration of Mr. Allworthy, I shall not scruple to say that they make a very bad and ungrateful use of that knowledge which we have communicated to them. (3.5)

and sometimes encouragingly:

> And now, reader, as we are in haste to attend our heroine, we will leave to thy sagacity to apply all this to the Bœotian [dimwitted] writers and to those authors who are their opposites. This thou wilt be abundantly able to perform without our aid. Bestir thyself therefore on this occasion, for tho' we will always lend thee proper assistance in difficult places—as we do not, like some others, expect thee to use the arts of divination to discover our meaning—yet we shall not indulge thy laziness where nothing but thy own attention is required; for thou art highly mistaken if thou dost imagine that we intended, when we began this great work, to leave thy sagacity nothing to do; or that, without sometimes exercising this talent, thou wilt be able to travel through our pages with any pleasure or profit to thyself. (11.9)

This last one is especially important: among other things, *Tom Jones* is a tutorial on how to read great literature, which—unlike not-so-great entertainment—requires a certain amount of work on the reader's part, a willingness to actively participate in constructing the novel's meaning rather than an expectation to be passively spoon-fed. The prefatory chapter to book 3 is especially insistent on this point, where the narrator flatters the reader by occasionally leaving some matters unsaid in order to give him "an opportunity of employing that wonderful sagacity of which he is master, by filling up those vacant spaces of time with his own conjectures, for which purpose we have taken care to qualify him in the preceding pages" (3.1). The reader's conjectures should be based on information provided "in the

preceding pages," and if the reader ignores or misinterprets that information, the narrator will rap his knuckles as in the belligerent passage quoted above. Superior novels require superior readers, and in his numerous asides (I've quoted only a fraction), Fielding teaches us how to become such readers.

Of course one can ignore all the prefaces and asides and read *Tom Jones* only for the story, but that would downgrade it from art to entertainment. Fielding dramatizes the difference between these two approaches in the responses of Jones and Partridge to the Man of the Hill's story (one of such great betrayal and disappointment that he has become a misanthropic hermit). Naïve Partridge keeps interrupting the tale to make irrelevant comments, to "relate" to certain events, to ask the meaning of certain words, and to speculate on characters' motives—all to Jones's growing irritation. (Partridge is as bad a narrator as he is a reader: his attempt at a short story, like Sancho Panza's, is a rambling mess.) Jones, on the other hand, listens carefully to the Man of the Hill's story, and afterward not only critiques it intelligently but challenges the author's intended moral.[217] "As for Partridge, he had fallen into a profound repose just as the stranger finished his story, for his curiosity was satisfied, and the subsequent discourse was not forcible enough in its operation to conjure down the charms of sleep" (8.15): he's in it only for the story, while Jones is in it for the discourse, and I don't have to tell you which kind of reader Fielding prefers for his "great work."[218]

Fielding wasn't the first to include these self-conscious asides and metafictional intrusions, or to write a critifiction, but his decision to include tutorial materials speaks to the urgency he felt to elevate the novel genre to the ranks of capital-L Literature: the ancients limited that to poetry and the drama, a view held by some literary conservatives until the early 20th century. (An English major at Harvard in 1900 studied poems and plays, not novels—those were for recreational use only.) To achieve that goal, he combined an *Ars Poetica* for the 18th-century novel with a demonstration-class model of how it would look in the hands of a genius. (And as he points out in the prefatory chapter to book 9, he was interested only in geniuses writing for the pit, not in hacks writing for "the upper gallery, a place in which few of our readers ever sit" [12.12].) Like a popular teacher,

he makes his master-class in narratology fun: he exhibits an urbane, easy-going attitude throughout, a bantering tone, amusing chapter titles and parodies of epic similes (à la Scarron in *The Comic Novel*), offers wise observations on human nature, displays wide erudition (but lampoons those who abuse learning), includes friends and associates in his novel, along with a delightful last-minute cameo by Parson Adams of *Joseph Andrews*—all wrapped up in what Coleridge called one of "the three most perfect plots ever planned."[219] For those who want to delve deeper, there are political implications in the novel—admirably analyzed by Thomas Keymer in his introduction to the Penguin edition of *Tom Jones* (xxii–xxix)—and stinging social criticism of arranged marriages, which Fielding boldly calls "legal prostitution for hire" (16.8). Upstaging Tom Jones is Fielding himself, the perfect host and narrator. In the opening chapter he compares himself to the genial owner of a tavern, but by the end he more closely resembles the landlord Squire Western stays with when he arrives in London: "I can tell you Landlord is a vast comical bitch, you will like un hugely" (17.3).

It's not unusual (as the other Tom Jones would say) for a successful novel to be followed by imitations, and later in 1749 there appeared an eccentric one claiming to be "the first begotten, of the poetical issue, of the much celebrated biographer of *Joseph Andrews* and *Tom Jones*." Combining the first name of Fielding's wife (mentioned in *Tom Jones* as the inspiration for Sophia [13.1]) with the surname of Jones' biological father, *The History of Charlotte Summers, the Fortunate Parish Girl* is the work of an anonymous wit (certainly not Sarah Fielding, as once suggested) who mounted the metafictional superstructure of *Tom Jones* onto a 1720s-style amatory romance. The story concerns a seven-year-old orphan adopted by a rich woman named Lady Bountiful, who raises Charlotte with her son Thomas on her estate in Wales. We learn she's the offspring of a profligate father who abandoned his neurotically self-sacrificing wife and daughter; after the mother died, Charlotte became a ward of the parish and endured Dickensian horrors at the hands of heartless women who traffic in orphans. (Coincidentally, Charlotte later assumes the false name Sally Dickens.) Growing into a beautiful 17-year-old of "frozen virtue"—which she may have picked up from reading La Calprenède's *Cassandra* and *Cleopatra* (2.2)—Charlotte begins to attract suitors, including one family relation who

tries to rape her, the first of many sexual assaults she will endure. Too dutiful to Lady Bountiful to countenance her son's Thomas's marriage proposal—which the snobbish woman forbids, encouraging her instead to marry her assailant—Charlotte runs away (like Clarissa), which leads to another near-rape before she can seek refuge at a Welsh farmhouse, where she's caught in a taffy-pull between two hayseeds who want to marry her, and thence to London, where (like Fanny Hill) she accidentally winds up in a whorehouse, and then is framed and (like Tom Jones) thrown in jail. Eventually, her long-lost, now-rich father reenters the picture (as in *Roderick Random*), and she is reunited with and married to her childhood sweetheart.

Commenting along the way on all this is a sardonic narrator who outdoes Fielding in some ways. He not only addresses his readers (though not as often as Fielding does), but gives them names and treats them like hecklers. After filling in Lady Bountiful's backstory, he writes:

> I can hear Beau Thoughtless and pretty Miss Pert whispering to one another, "Hang the old woman, I wish we were done with her, I want to see the young wench there has been so much talk about, whereabout can she be? sure she's locked up in the old lady's closet. The devil take our conductor, after leading us such a dance from London to Carmarthenshire, to keep us so long from what we want to see." But I must inform the pretty triflers than I am determined my readers shall learn something in every chapter, and in this, amongst other things, they must learn and practice patience, for let them be in never so great a hurry to come at the speech of Miss Summers, they cannot come near her without my permission, and as I have now got them into my custody, they must travel my pace or get back to London on foot without seeing the show. (1.1)

The narrator maintains this antagonistic attitude throughout as he records objections made by readers named Miss Snatch-at-it and Mrs. Sit-her-time, both of whom criticize Charlotte for being so inflexible, and he mocks the prurient curiosity of Miss Censorious, sniffing for any whiff sexual scandal. After he reunites father and daughter, the narrator wants to end the novel there, but over the dead body of another paying customer: " 'Oh, pox!' says

widow Lock-it, 'sure you won't give over without marrying her? It's impossible she can be happy without a husband. Besides, it's contrary to all rule to end a history of this kind without marrying the hero and heroine. Plague! I would not give a rush for it without a wedding night' " (4.11). Cynically giving his audience what they want (rather than what they need, as *Buffy* producer Josh Whedon advises artists), he milks the expected ending for all it's worth, sarcastically describing the final chapter as "Containing what few could expect, viz., an account of how Miss Summers, after all her great struggles in defense of her virtue, went at last openly to bed to a man" (4.11).

The most remarkable dramatization of a hypothetical reader's response occurs at the beginning of book 1, chapter 5, just after the narrator concludes the previous chapter to "permit the reader to take a nap, or entertain himself any other way most suitable to his inclinations; only let him remember that he left off at the end of the 4th chapter":

> Pretty Miss Arabella Dimple is just now stept into bed—the evening is very warm, and the blooming fair has turned herself to and fro and cannot find herself disposed for rest; she has tossed the bedclothes almost down to her middle, and lies with her delicate arms and snowy bosom exposed to full view, while her maid Polly, envious that so much beauty should appear unshrouded, is just about to take away the candle when the charming girl calls to her: "Polly, this night is so intolerably warm, I shall not sleep this age unless you can find some means to lull me to rest. Pray step down to the parlor and bring me up the first volume of the *Parish Girl* I was reading in the afternoon. I think I left it on the spinet." Polly goes and returns with the dull book, and sets herself down by her mistress's beside. "Pray, ma'am, where shall I begin, did your ladyship fold down where you left off?" "No, fool, I did not; the book is divided into chapters on purpose to prevent that ugly custom of thumbing and spoiling the leaves.[220] And now I think on't, the author bid me remember that I left off at the end of— I think it was the 6th chapter. Turn to the 7th chapter and let me hear how it begins." Polly reads, "Chapter the 7th: The death of my Lady Fanciful's squirrel occasioned a wonderful hurly-burly in the family, and had like to have produced very fatal

> consequences if the wit and address of Beau Careless had not opportunely interposed to remedy those disasters the fatal accident had occasioned." "Hold, wench, you read too fast, and I don't understand one word of what you are saying about a beau and a squirrel, and Lady Fanciful; I never heard of them before; I must not have got so far. Look back to the end of that chapter where the blockhead of an author bids us take a nap, and remember where he left off." "O la, ma'am, I have found it; here it is. As your ladyship says, he says, [quotes end of chapter 4]. Is not that the place, ma'am?" "Yes, Polly, go on, and read distinctly, and not as if you were drawling over your prayers."———

Earlier novelists occasionally addressed their readers, but never dramatized the actual reading experience in such a goofily realistic way. As Wayne Booth wrote long ago (with some qualification), "This is of course a great 'advance' over Fielding; it is unquestionably as 'Shandean' as anything Tristram ever does" (182). The fact that this interruption occurs within a story-within-a-story makes it almost Borgesian, especially when the narrator interrupts 16 pages later, after we've been lulled back into the story:

> But the reader must remember Polly, Miss Dimple's maid, is reading all this while. She had just come to this length when she looks about at her mistress and finds her fast asleep. "Oh la," says she softly to herself, "how can my mistress fall asleep at hearing this sweet book read? I am sure I will not sleep a wink, at least till I get to the end of this pure story of the charitable farmer, sure he was a good man; but I will steal away softly to my own bed and there read for I shall never be tired; but stay, I must not lose my place, nor yet fold down the leaves; oh, I shall remember it, for I am just as the end of a chapter. The sixth chapter is next; that I shall not forget, for I will put just six pins in my sleeve, and that will make me remember it when my mistress asks me." The reader may do the same, if he pleases, for it's time to put an end to the chapter when pretty Miss Dimple sleeps over it. (1.5)

Motivating these intrusions is the conflict between what the author would prefer to write and what readers like Miss Dimple want this "blockhead" to

write. The result is a sentimental fiction for the gallery, a sarcastic metafiction for the pit. Like Fielding, he prefaces each of the novel's four books with an essay, which (unlike Fielding) stand in sophisticated contrast to the rather conventional story they preface; the one for book 3 is a "dissertation on dreaming," specifically the role dreaming plays in the creative process. No sooner does the author announce the topic than he gets pushback from the conventional reader: " 'A dissertation on dreaming! What the devil does the fellow mean? What have we to do with dreaming?' says Dick Dapperwit in a passion, 'pray leave off fooling and go on with your *History of the Parish Girl*, and take some other opportunity to tell us your dreams' " (3.1). The narrator dares Dapperwit to skip to the next chapter, "where, for your punishment, you'll find nothing but dreams. For what, pray, have we been doing all this while but telling our dreams?" He goes on to explain how novels begin with inchoate images from daydreams, with as-yet undeveloped characters that consist only of body parts: "for sometimes you may meet with a half-finished limb of the chaste Miss Western lying without any emotion next an unclothed member of the wicked Tom Jones"—typical of the author's relish for Miss Censorious-bating sexual innuendo—and then describes how "the judgment and understanding are employed in picking, choosing, and rejecting materials which the imagination has furnished." He talks of drawing inspiration from dreams, and recommends keeping a dream journal, especially women: "I wish I could recommend it to my female readers to take the trouble to commit to writing some of their sleeping or waking dreams: (What a foolish fancy is this!) By it they might learn to dream regularly, and might see in their sleep a novel as entertaining as any ever wrote by Mrs. Behn or Haywood, and conveying, perhaps, as good a moral." Eighteen pages later, Charlotte has an erotic dream, and it's clear that's the kind of fiction the leering author hopes his female readers will write.

All of this is at subversive odds with the conventional narrative of the parish girl, whose "high, enthusiastic notion of virtue" (2.5) the author pretends to admire while backhandedly dismissing it as merely "notions that *at this time* prevail in the polite world" (4.2, my italics). As in *Tom Jones*, we're encouraged to regard the narrator, rather than the title character, as the true protagonist of the novel—in this case a clever, literary writer reduced to churning out commercial fiction for the likes of Arabella

Dimple and her maid, and who can't resist making some snarky remarks about his blockhead readers. Unlike Fielding and more like Furetière, he prefers mocking his readers to educating them, and enjoyed some success: either they enjoyed his raillery, or were too distracted by Charlotte Summers' charms—there are several lickerish descriptions of our beautiful heroine in various states of undress—for the novel went through at least four printings in the 1750s and was freely translated into French in 1751, which was in turn translated into Russian in 1763 and influenced one of Russia's earliest novels.[221] Lost in the crowd of other Fielding imitators, *Charlotte Summers* deserves to be rediscovered.

Fiction as daydreaming would explain the last significant English novel of the 1740s, *The Life and Adventures of Peter Wilkins* (1750), a hybrid robinsonade/utopian fantasy written by a Cornish lawyer named Robert Paltock (1697–1767). Stuck in London in a lowly position, saddled with debt and four teenage children, Paltock daydreamed what it would be like to get away from it all, marry a beautiful 18-year-old, and civilize a previously unknown society of avian humanoids living near the South Pole.

Out of a dark swarm in the sky one night around 1730, a man falls into the sea near a ship rounding Cape Horn, is hauled aboard, and insists on telling his unbelievable story to a sympathetic passenger. Wasting his youth, cheated out of his inheritance by an evil stepfather, knocking up a maid and reluctantly marrying her while still a teenager, Peter Wilkins runs away to hop a ship sailing south, is captured and conveyed to a slave colony in Angola, and then escapes thanks to a resourceful African. Wilkins and some other Europeans hijack a ship and try to return to England, but instead shipwreck on a magnetic island, with all hands lost except for Wilkins, who survives long enough to discover a cavern river that expels him (with obvious birth imagery) "into a kind of new world," as the descriptive title page has it. Like Robinson Crusoe, he builds a hut and learns to fend for himself on an uninhabited island. After dreaming one night that his wife back home has died, he hears a noise outside and learns that a woman wearing a strange outfit has crash-landed on his porch. Nursing her back to health in his dimly lit hut, he learns her language—she calls herself Youwarkee—and they fall in love and decide to marry; it is not until their wedding night, when he tries to take off her form-fitting garment, that

Wilkins discovers Youwarkee is encased in wings—not feathered ones but membranous, like a bat's. He has some trouble locating the entrance to her bat-cave (so to speak), but thereafter they lead an idyllic life and produce several half-breeds.

One indication this is a daydream is the alacrity with which Youwarkee conforms to Wilkins's wishes. When she learns that Englishwomen wear clothes, she plans to make herself a suit like her husband's, which throws him into a panic:

> "No, Youwarkee," replied I, "you must not do so; if you make such a jacket as mine, there will be no distinction between *glumm* and *gawry* [man and woman]; the *gawren praave* [modest women] in my country would not on any account go dressed like a *glumm*, for they wear a fine, flowing garment called a gown that sits tight about the waist and hangs down thence in folds . . . almost to the ground, so that you can hardly discern their feet and no other part of their body but their hands and face, and about as much of their necks and breasts as you show in your *graundee* [wings]." (1:20).[222]

Youwarkee cheerfully fashions a sheath-like dress that, along with her bat-wings and the sunglasses Wilkins makes for her, must have made her look like a wicked vampire, though a wingéd angel is probably what Paltock had in mind.

Eventually Youwarkee wants to visit home, and Wilkins learns that in her country there's a prophecy that a stranger will arrive someday to reorganize their society. Deciding to play that role, Wilkins travels there (seated in a chair on the backs of a squadron of Youwarkee's fellow aviators) and first puts down a rebellion based on the Jacobite threat to George I's England to restore the deposed Stuart royal family.[223] Over the next decade, Wilkins slowly converts his wife's simple, pastoral country into a European-style nation, complete with capitalism, scientific activity, guns and artillery, the arts, industrialization, and of course Christianity. Near the end, he ponders what he has done, transforming a contented people that "seemed to desire only what they had" into one that desired "to be supplied not only with the conveniences but the superfluities of life" (2.22). The previous society

wasn't perfect—it depended heavily on slavery, which Wilkins vehemently opposes—but only a colonial entrepreneur could regard this new commodity culture as an improvement.

What Paltock thought isn't clear. He makes it obvious that young Wilkins isn't very bright; one critic writing during the Cold War called him "an exceptionally stupid young man . . . as morally obtuse as an American politician brandishing an atom bomb."[224] But it's difficult to tell whether Paltock is satirizing him or commending him for pulling his life together, overcoming his prejudices against blacks and women, learning to be a responsible and loving husband (as he certainly is with Youwarkee), and for bringing European values to an unambitious, illiterate, slave-holding society of heathen bird-people. (Probably the latter.) It's also unclear whether Youwarkee's literal descent from unfettered flight to obedient domesticity and maternity (7 kids over 14 years) is an improvement: she was on an aerial joyride with friends, and as a governor's daughter she *lowers* herself socially by marrying him. Most readers of the 18th century would say yes, but even back then some would demur. (Wilkins's sense of social inferiority is expressed by his envy of her ability to fly.) As a lawyer, Paltock could have made his case stronger, or perhaps he was content to provide the evidence and let us the jury decide.

Peter Wilkins reads more like a Walter Mittyesque daydream than a sociological critique, but despite some imaginative conceptions and H. Rider Haggard-type adventures near the end, the novel never quite gets off the ground. It lacks what Fielding would call genius. Nevertheless, the novel tapped into the reading public's long dream of flight, and has attracted readers ever since. Coleridge and the other Romantics loved it, Leigh Hunt and George Saintsbury doted on lovely Youwarkee in particular, and Borges included her in his *Book of Imaginary Beings*. Appearing at the end of a decade that established the realist mode in English fiction, *Peter Wilkins* reminds us (as Turner reminds us in his introduction) there are "emotions, aspirations, and anxieties not always adequately expressed in 'formal realist' fiction" (vii).

By 1750, the English novel had achieved parity with those published on the continent, and was grudgingly recognized by some of the English intelligentsia as a force to reckon with, though there was much debate over how that force should be used. In 1749, *Fanny Hill*'s publisher Richard Griffiths founded the *Monthly Review*, the first periodical devoted solely to book-reviewing and to setting standards for good fiction. (Let us take a moment of silence to remember all the evils committed ever since in that cause. The *Monthly Review* panned the innovative *Charlotte Summers* and shrugged at *Peter Wilkins.*) And in 1750, the Great Cham (as Smollett later dubbed Samuel Johnson, meaning "khan") passed judgment on the upstart realist novel in a famous essay published in *The Rambler*; under the obtuse, condescending assumption that novels "are written chiefly to the young, the ignorant, and the idle, to whom they serve as lectures of conduct and introductions into life," fuddy-duddy Johnson tried to throw a wet blanket on the changing medium by arguing that novels should remain Sunday school lessons in morality, and that authors shouldn't muddy matters by "ming[ling] good and bad qualities in their principal personages."[225] Regarding fiction merely as the entertainment wing of moral philosophy, not as an independent artistic endeavor, he doesn't say a word about aesthetics, and it's not surprising that his own effort at fiction, the faux-Oriental novella *Rasselas* (1759), is a dull, dispiriting lecture on resignation. By contrast, *An Essay on the New Species of Writing Founded by Henry Fielding* (1751), probably written by Francis Coventry (1725–54), intelligently discusses Fielding's use of characterization, style, plotting, chapter headings—he criticizes the authors of *Roderick Random* and *Charlotte Summers* for giving away too much of the plot in theirs—and encourages innovation: "A tolerable original is greatly preferable to the best copy, and it shows a greater genius in passing with some difficulty an untrodden path than to go without a slip through a broad, beaten track. And I do not think it one of the least of Milton's excellencies that he treats of 'Things unattempted yet, in prose or rhyme.'"[226]

As good as his word, Coventry published in February 1751 a tolerably original and totally delightful novel with a dog as its hero, *Pompey the Little.* (Pompey the Great was a human general of the Roman breed who lived during the 1st century bce). Since anyone can be the protagonist of a

novel these days, the narrator argues in his first chapter—a country maid, a foundling, a parish girl, a prostitute—why not a dog? Attentive to his master's voice, Coventry wags his dog's tale in a bantering, educated, mock-heroic tone that owes as much to Pope as to Fielding. (Pompey's literary pedigree includes Shock, Belinda's lapdog in "The Rape of the Lock.") The descendant of a long line of aristocratic canines, Pompey is born in Bologna in 1735 to a celebrated courtesan, whose English lover takes the lapdog with him back to England and gives him to the animal-loving woman he is trying to seduce, Lady Tempest. Thereafter Pomp experiences the same dramatic reversals as other fictional protagonists—abducted, rescued, loved, lost, mentored, mistreated, given away, threatened with jail and death—as he moves between the upper and lower classes, until he is eventually reunited with his first love, Lady Tempest, and dies on 2 June 1749. Sometimes he bewails his fate in the same lofty tones as Tom Jones, but mostly he just listens to his various masters and mistresses.

What he hears is what people talk about behind closed doors when they think there's no one but the dog listening. In superbly rendered dialogue, Coventry gives us couples arguing, children fighting, sisters snickering, intellectuals debating, lawyers equivocating, servants gossiping, Methodists moping, fops fluttering, beaus boasting, college students pranking—a vocal cross-section of British society with special attention to women, particularly the idle rich who regard a lapdog as a must-have fashion accessory. Describing Lady Tempest, the narrator alludes to a line from Pope's epistle "To a Lady" ("But ev'ry woman is at heart a rake"), and as in that superlative poem Coventry walks us through a portrait gallery of ridiculous women, capturing their frivolous lives to a T. One of his models, Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, attests to the accuracy of Coventry's dog act, writing in 1752 to her daughter to say, "It is a real and exact representation of life as it is now acted in London, as it was in my time, and as it will be (I do not doubt) a hundred years hence, with some little variation of dress, and perhaps government. I found there many of my acquaintance. Lady T[ownshend] and Lady O[rford] are so well painted I fancy I heard them talk, and have heard them say the very things here repeated."[227] Like a guy today who walks his dog to attract women, Coventry trots out cute little Pompey as an excuse for dozens of slash-and-burn character studies, and to

do things a human couldn't get away with doing or saying in polite society—as when Pomp poops on the memoirs of the founder of Methodism, or flirts with "*bitches of the highest fashion*" (1.6), which Coventry italicizes to drive home the point that humans and animals are not so different. In fact, Pompey is superior to all but three of the novel's large human cast; despite the silly premise, *Pompey the Little* is a Swiftian indictment of British society.

Though primarily an homage/parody of Fielding's novels and Pope's poems, *Pompey the Little* is indebted to two novels written earlier in the century by Charles Gildon. In 1708, he published an adaptation of Apuleius called *The New Metamorphosis*, in which the protagonist is magically transformed not into an ass but into a Bolognese lapdog, enabling Gildon to recycle stories of romantic intrigue as Fantasio is passed around. The following year, he brought out the first volume of *The Golden Spy*, discussed earlier, which provided the template for the "it-narrative" that *Pompey* popularized, in which a mobile animal or object provides a similar secret view of society. Coventry doesn't use this device as effectively as he could: *Pompey* is not told from the dog's point of view, and like his owners, Coventry ignores the pooch for dozens of pages at a time. But no matter: Coventry didn't intend to rival Fielding, just nip at his heels: when he revised the novel in 1752, Coventry added a prefatory dedication to Fielding in which he admits his "little work" is "unworthy to be ranked in that class of writings" that Fielding dominated. Only 25 when he published *Pompey the Little*, Coventry displays the potential for a greater work—he had an undeniable gift for comic dialogue and social satire—but unfortunately he died three years later.

The same month *Pompey the Little* appeared, Tobias Smollett published his second novel, *The Adventures of Peregrine Pickle* (1751). If *Pompey* is a petite, groomed lapdog, *Peregrine Pickle* is a huge, shaggy mutt that knocks you over and humps your leg. Smollett was apparently impressed by the size and especially the sales of *Tom Jones*, if nothing else. He dismissively refers to Fielding as "Mr. Spondy" at one point in the novel, and at another has the nerve to write: "I might here, in imitation of some celebrated writers, furnish out a page or two with the reflections he made upon the instability of human affairs, the treachery of the world, and the temerity of youth, and endeavor to decoy the reader into a smile by some quaint

observation of my own touching the sagacious moralizer; but, besides that I look upon this practice as an impertinent anticipation of the peruser's thoughts, I have too much matter of importance upon my hands to give the reader the least reason to believe that I am driven to such paltry shifts, in order to eke out the volume."[228] This appears in volume eked out to 780 pages with all sorts of padding, including the 100-page "Memoirs of a Lady of Quality" by a socialite who may have paid Smollett to insert it, and which ruins any structural unity the novel might have had. (It worked sales-wise, for many bought the novel just for the scandalous confession.)

A brasher, vainer, lustier Tom Jones, Peregrine Pickle follows in the same trajectory as Fielding's more upstanding protagonist: he is banished from his father's house and raised by a sea-dog uncle—a marvelous comic creation—and during a childhood devoted mostly to pranking he falls for a livelier version of Sophia named Emilia. (He even has a Blifil-like brother.) He then goes off to college to party, to London for more tomfoolery, then tours France for a year and a half—following in Smollett's footsteps in 1750, possibly to gather material for this novel—and after some low adventures in the Low Countries returns to London for further coxcombry, under full sail of his "ridiculous pride" and "the impetuosity of his passions" until the "pert jackanapes" invariably runs out of money, works on Grub Street for a while, and is imprisoned for debt. He is sprung after he inherits his estranged father's fortune, and then marries his childhood sweetheart, mature enough now to settle in the country rather than return to the "world of scandal."

The unoriginal story is essentially a vehicle for various pranks, revenge schemes, and sexual escapades, some very funny, others not so much. Pickle is clearly a surrogate for the author: Smollett is describing his compositional self when he writes, "Peregrine's satirical disposition was never more gratified than when he had an opportunity of exposing grave characters in ridiculous attitudes" (24), and again when we're told "his disposition broke out into those irregularities and wild sallies of a luxuriant imagination for which he became so remarkable" (25). Smollett wrote this novel quickly, and during the many times when Pickle "set his invention to work in order to contrive some means of" accomplishing something or other, we simultaneously witness Smollett setting *his* invention to work.

The most metafictional moment occurs in chapter 38, when Pickle meets a Welsh apothecary and asks "if he was not the person so respectfully mentioned in *The Adventures of Roderick Random*"; he admits he is, and criticizes Random (not Smollett) for broadcasting his private affairs. Pickle has also read *Gil Blas*, presumably in Smollett's translation (1748).

Among his "wild sallies" is another Joycean letter—"Prey for the loaf of Geesus keep this from the nolegs of my hussban" (45)—much hilarious use of nautical imagery (especially when applied to women), a number of comically alliterative names (Comfit Colocynth, Timothy Trickle, Jacob Jolter), moral advice expressed in mathematical terms (27), a farcical supper in ancient Roman style (48), and an episode that anticipates Shaw's *Pygmalion*: Pickle buys a 16-year-old waif for coitus, then thinks it would be fun to clean her up and pass her off as a cultivated lady. All goes well until the night she plays cards with some aristocrats and catches a "real" lady cheating, "and burst open the floodgates of her own natural repartee, twanged off with the appellations of b— and w—, which she repeated with great vehemence in an attitude of manual defiance, to the terror of her antagonist and the astonishment of all present: nay, to such an unguarded pitch was she provoked that, starting up, she snapt her fingers in testimony of disdain and, as she quitted the room, applied her hand to that part which was the last of her that disappeared, inviting the company to kiss it by one of its coarsest denominations" (95). Edited down to half its size, *Peregrine Pickle* would be a successful comic novel, but as its stands, it's a cross between a bloated *Roderick Random* and a boorish *Tom Jones*.

Another writer who took note of Fielding's success and mocked him was the unsinkable Eliza Haywood, who in October 1751 published her longest novel, the 600-page *History of Miss Betsy Thoughtless*. At a time when most novels still ended with marriage, Haywood took on the more difficult task of dealing with the first years of married life, an early contribution to the genre of domestic fiction. But that's the best that can be said for a novel that its earliest critics rightly found dull and insipid. *Betsy Thoughtless* is basically a rewrite of Davys's *Reformed Coquette*: the orphaned title character enters London social life at age 14 and feeds her vanity by collecting as many admirers as possible. She inadvertently encourages some who only want to have sex with her, and discourages more serious suitors, such as the decent Charles Trueworth. (Like Fielding and Smollett,

Haywood gives her characters Restoration/allegorical names.) Her careless coquetting leads to several near-rapes, which cause her concerned brothers to push her into marrying a mundane suitor named Munden, a courtier looking for a suitable trophy wife. This is the point—about 140 pages from the end—where *Betsy Thoughtless* departs from earlier amatory romances, which concluded either in marriage or ruin. Betsy tries her best to be a dutiful wife, but when she learns her husband is having an affair with a French adventuress, she leaves him, privileging self-respect over conventional notions of marital duty. However, as Jane Spencer notes, "Haywood avoids pursuing the more radical implications of this story by arranging a convenient death for Munden" (151). As soon as Betsy learns he is dying, she rushes back to his side out of "duty" (the word appears often during this episode) and then dutifully buries herself in the country for a year of mourning for the jerk. Haywood arranges another convenient death of the woman Trueworth married after Betsy rejected him, and the novel reverts to type with a sappy wedding at the end.

Some critics see similarities between *Betsy Thoughtless* and *Tom Jones*—both protagonists are orphans, both are adviced that it's as important to *appear* respectable as to be respectable, both are thoughtless rather than delinquent, both have villainous siblings—though Fielding's influence strikes me as limited to the use of chapters—most of Haywood's earlier novels are uninterrupted—and bantering chapter headings, beginning with the first chapter that "Gives the reader room to guess at what is to ensue, though ten to one but he finds himself deceived." Sometimes these backfire, as when she accurately describes one chapter as "Containing very little to the purpose" (3.9), and toward the end she runs out of clever comments and makes do with "More of the same" and "Affords variety of amusements" (4.20, 21). But unlike *Tom Jones*, *Betsy Thoughtless* suffers from bland, first-draftish prose,[229] reactionary platitudes, stagy monologues, incredible coincidences, and sketchiness: it's all foreground, like a play performed on a bare stage, with little of the realistic background that had become the norm by this time. Haywood had written a number of conduct books over the decades, and *Betsy Thoughtless* is essentially a novelized conduct book for young misses, not a work of literature for adults. (In this regard, it's

more reminiscent of *Pamela* than *Tom Jones*.) One can sympathize with Betsy's criticism of gender expectations:

> "I wonder," continued she, "what can make the generality of women so fond of marrying? It looks to me like an infatuation. Just as if it were not a greater pleasure to be courted, complimented, admired, and addressed by a number, than to be confined to one, who from a slave becomes a master, and perhaps uses his authority in a manner disagreeable enough.
>
> "And yet, it is expected from us. One has no sooner left off one's bib and apron than people cry, 'Miss will soon be married.' And this man, and that man, is presently picked out for a husband. Mighty ridiculous! They want to deprive us of all the pleasures of life just when one begins to have a relish for them." (4.3)

Such criticism is undercut by Betsy's wish simply to party thoughtlessly and be admired like her pet squirrel, and by the reader's suspicion that she fears sex. In one of the few instances where Haywood employs imagery, Betsy is shaken by news that tall, dark Trueworth has married, but explains away her agitation to others by saying she "had been frightened as she came alone by a great black ox who, by the carelessness of the drivers, had like to have run his horns quite into the chair" she was riding in (3.22), an unmistakable phallic image.[230] Some have made large claims for *Betsy Thoughtless*, such as Christopher Flint, who feels it "bridges the fictional narratives of Behn or Defoe and the works of Burney and Austen" (219), but it does so only in subject matter, not in artistic sophistication.

Haywood makes a condescending reference at one point to "the little theater in the Haymarket then known by the name of F—g's scandal shop" (1.8)—where Haywood worked in the 1730s—but Fielding had other reasons to mock *Betsy Thoughtless* in a piece he published shortly after its publication that takes the form of a court proceeding against the novel for the crime of dullness.[231] Unfortunately, the same charge could be made against Fielding's final novel, *Amelia* (December 1751), a competent but rather tedious novel about three difficult months in the lives of a perfect wife (based on Fielding's first wife) and an imperfect husband, a decent man named William Booth who carelessly racks up enough debt to be

committed to prison at the beginning of the novel. Further financial difficulties push the family to the brink of disaster when it is revealed that Amelia was cheated out of her inheritance, which is restored to her at the end. The novel realistically conveys the irritants and insults a financially distressed family must endure at the hands of incompetent magistrates, greedy bailiffs, crooked lawyers, corrupt bureaucrats, pawnbrokers, and various conmen, exacerbated by the efforts of a few characters to seduce the beautiful and innocent Amelia, who is aligned by way of numerous allusions to Shakespeare's Desdemona. Instead of the boisterous, bantering tone he used in previous novels, Fielding lets his characters do most of the talking—the novel is exceptional in the amount of dialogue it contains—though the narrator often interrupts to point a moral, criticize people, or (most often) to explain why he's leaving material out.

Amelia is a well-constructed novel—its tight structure is based on that of the *Aeneid*—with a varied cast of characters, but there's a tiredness to the novel, as though Fielding were phoning in his performance, compounded by bland chapter titles (e.g., "Containing Various Matters"; "What Passed at the Bailiff's House"), numerous anachronisms (the main action of the novel is set in the spring of 1733), and some self-indulgent displays of erudition. Fielding's social consciousness and recommendations for reforms are commendable, but the didacticism isn't, and after a while Amelia's unquestioning devotion to her hapless husband becomes more maudlin than admirable. (The sermons delivered by the family clergyman don't help.) There are occasional flashes of the old Fielding, the one who based his novels not on the dour *Aeneid* but on the comic *Margites*, and ultimately he deserves the compliment Amelia pays to her clergyman: "But you understand human nature to the bottom, . . . and your mind is the treasury of all ancient and modern learning" (9.5). Ever the teacher, Fielding continues to tutor readers and novelists by way of various asides on why he is leaving out or inserting information, his encouragement to readers to figure certain things out for themselves, and his reforms of older fiction conventions. (When telling their backstories, his characters always explain how they can recall dialogue, which few novelists before Fielding justified.) As fine a novel as any other published in the 1750s, *Amelia* suffers only in comparison to his previous work. As the aforementioned Lady Mary

Wortley Montagu wrote, in his final novel Fielding is "inferior to himself, superior to most others."[232]

Fielding disliked *Betsy Thoughtless* but loved *The Female Quixote* (1752), the second novel by a young woman named Charlotte Lennox (1729?–1804).[233] Like Cervantes, Lennox doesn't simply mock a worn-out genre—in her case, 17th-century French heroic romances—but uses them to dramatize the danger of confusing fiction with reality. Raised by her aristocratic father in an isolated castle and mistaking her dead mother's collection of romances for history books, young Arabella assumes the outside world still resembles that depicted in the novels of La Calprenède and Scudéry, and models herself on their imperious heroines, with predictably funny results. (And I mean *funny*: I laughed myself silly over it.) Her cousin, Charles Granville, returns from his travels when Arabella is 17 and is baffled by her behavior, as are his father and sister when they pay an extended visit after the death of Arabella's father. Falling in love with the strange but beautiful girl, Glanville tries to accommodate himself to her tastes, but regrets volunteering to read her favorite novels: "Arabella having ordered one of her women to bring *Cleopatra*, *Cassandra*, and *The Grand Cyrus* from her library, Glanville no sooner saw the girl return, sinking under the weight of those voluminous romances, but he began to tremble at the apprehension of his cousin laying her commands upon him to read them, and repented of his complaisance, which exposed him to the cruel necessity of performing what to him appeared a Herculean labour, or else incurring her anger by his refusal" (1.12). A young neighbor named Sir George Bellmour thinks he has a better shot at Arabella because he has actually read those novels, and in fact once started to translate *Cyrus the Great*, "but the prodigious length of the task he had undertaken terrified him so much that he gave it over" (3.7). To impress her, Sir George gives a long recitation of his "adventures" in heroic-romance style, but this gussied-up account of his affairs with old girlfriends backfires, for Arabella accuses him of "inconstancy," the worst thing that can be said of a romance hero. In order to cure Arabella of her "foible," the others take her first to the resort town of Bath, where Arabella's antique costume and theatrical attitude excites comment and further hilarity, and then to London. Mistaking some distant gentlemen for dastardly abductors, she flees by jumping into the

Thames, intending to swim away like Clelia in Scudéry's novel of that name (and like Juliette in Subligny's *Mock Clelia*, which may have inspired Lennox). As Arabella recovers from that ordeal, a kindly clergyman (said to be based on her mentor, Samuel Johnson) exposes her beloved "histories" as ludicrous fictions and recommends more realistic novels like Richardson's *Clarissa*. (Richardson too was a patron; the talented 23-year-old attracted the attention of many older writers, including Fielding.) Learning that the modern world doesn't resemble that of romance novels, Arabella ruefully notes "that the difference is not in favour of this present world" (9.11) and dutifully marries her long-suffering cousin.

Lennox displays a deep knowledge of heroic romances, and like a seasoned comedian milks them for every possible laugh, but does so in order to explore the nature of reading and interpretation. She makes it clear that Arabella isn't crazy, like the protagonists of *Don Quixote*, *The Extravagant Shepherd*, or *The Mock Clelia*, but the victim of an honest mistake. After her mother died, her father moved her old romance novels from her closet into his own library, which presumably consisted mostly of authentic history books, so young Arabella had no way of knowing they belonged to a different genre, nor did her isolated upbringing in a castle provide any evidence to suggest they were not realistic. By the time she comes of age, she's as committed to her worldview as any home-schooled fundamentalist raised to believe "holy" books are factual accounts of ancient history, and like them Arabella has "a most happy facility in accommodating every incident to her own wishes and conceptions" (1.7). Lennox dramatizes the vagaries of interpretation at the end of Sir George's heroic recitation: Arabella believes it is literally true; Glanville's father initially challenges and heckles the narrator about factual matters, but then "did not penetrate into the meaning of Sir George's story and only imagined that, by relating such a heap of adventures, he had a design to entertain the company, and give a proof of the facility of his invention" (6.11); Glanville's sister (who is keen on Sir George and resents his interest in Arabella) assumes "he had been ridiculing her cousin's strange notions"; and Glanville correctly assumes Sir George told the story only to ingratiate himself with Arabella. One text, four interpretations, each listener convinced his or hers is the correct one.

The question of how to read texts, of how "to penetrate into the meaning" of texts that appear to be something else on the surface, is raised again at the end, when the clergyman explains to Arabella how to distinguish fiction from fact, and how to regard fiction. Echoing Johnson's theory of fiction so closely that some older critics suspected he wrote the novel's penultimate critifictional chapter (9.11), the clergyman tells Arabella that French romances are worthless because they aren't realistic and because, unlike *Clarissa*, they fail "to convey the most solid instructions, the noblest sentiments, and the most exalted piety." (Not a word about about linguistic virtuosity, formal inventiveness, or even a sense of humor.) Worst of all, he says, they encourage readers to dream, to live:

> It is the fault of the best fictions that they teach young minds to expect strange adventures and sudden vicissitudes, and therefore encourage them often to trust to chance. A long life may be passed without a single occurrence that can cause much surprise, or produce any unexpected consequence of great importance; the order of the world is so established that all human affairs proceed in a regular method, and very little opportunity is left for sallies or hazards, for assault or rescue; but the brave and the coward, the sprightly and the dull, suffer themselves to be carried alike down the stream of custom.

Arabella respectfully questions whether the world is as drab and predictable as that, but admits French romances tend to glorify pride and cruelty and so renounces them. Patronized by both Johnson and Richardson, who helped her publish this novel, Lennox seems to acquiesce here to their theory of fiction, but she's not the first young woman to tell older male admirers what they want to hear in order to get what she wants. *The Female Quixote* contradicts every rule for good fiction the clergyman lays down, from its barely believable premise, to its clever parodies of the heroic romance, to its flamboyant "proof of the facility of [Lennox's] imagination." Like Glanville's sister, Johnson and Richardson seem to have thought Lennox was merely ridiculing heroic romance in favor of their didactic conception of the novel, not realizing that no one following their guidelines could ever produce a novel as ingenious as *The Female Quixote*. The novel is more Fieldingesque than Richardsonian, and not surprisingly Fielding wrote a

rave review of it, calling it "a most extraordinary and most excellent performance."[234] No solid instruction, noble sentiments, or exalted piety here, just a hilarious critifiction by a gifted young writer.[235]

Even more flamboyantly Fieldingesque is William Goodall's 600-page *Adventures of Captain Greenland* (1752), written, the subtitle informs us, "In Imitation of All Those Wise, Learned, Witty, and Humourous Authors Who Either Already Have, or Hereafter May Write in the Same Style and Manner," which indicates that Fielding's "new species of writing" had become a recognizable, marketable genre. Goodall fills his work with so many references to contemporary novels (*Pamela*, *Joseph Andrews*, *David Simple*, *Roderick Random*, *Pompey the Little*, *Amelia*) and with so many remarks to his readers and reflections on the book trade that *Captain Greenland* is less a novel than a metafiction about novel-writing. The story follows the usual Fielding/Smollett career-path of a high-spirited, good-hearted young man named Silvius Greenland, a weaver's apprentice, who develops a childhood crush on a local rich girl; when they grow old enough to marry, her disapproving relations send her off to Portugal. Greenland voyages after her (whereby he acquires the honorific title Captain), and after many adventures and peregrinations (including three or four years on an unknown island off the coast of Brazil, where he becomes rich) he rescues her from a forced wedding ceremony, marries her, and takes her back to their hometown of Worcester, where Greenland invites his friend Robert Willful to write the novel we've just read.[236]

Although late in the novel the narrator insists he's not a "slavish" imitator of Fielding's "innovations" (12.1), Goodall builds on his predecessor's example to maintain a running dialogue with the reader—sometimes obsequious, sometimes truculent—and to justify various digressions—though, unlike Fielding, he invites readers to tear out the ones they dislike. I hope this doesn't include library copies, for in one of the digressions he addresses the growing popularity of circulating libraries, which he complains robs authors of sales; consequently, he expects everyone who reads a library copy of his novel will buy one for home use, for it would be as scandalous "to be without the possession of this work as it would to be without *The Practice of Piety*, or *Tom Thumb the Great*, or *Pamela*, or *Amelia*, or *Jack the Giant-killer*, or any other *useful book*" (8.6). He tells his

readers to think of his novel as a long stagecoach journey, during which the page numbers function as milestone markers and chapter breaks as rest stops. (He must have imagined his readers as incontinent, for he overdoes the chapter breaks, often unnecessarily breaking one continuous scene into several short chapters.) Sometimes he excuses himself from narrating predictable scenes and/or invites the reader to supply them, as when he says, "Our amorous readers, who either do or have felt this universal passion, may save our pen almost a quarter of an hour's labour if they will here be pleased to conceive the extraordinary situation of our poor entangled Silvius" (1.10). Other times he reluctantly concedes to the perceived wish of his "amorous readers" for details by impatiently summarizing a predictable seduction scene: "let it suffice that we inform them that Willful prayed; she coloured; then he vowed; she sighed; he pressed; she frowned; . . ." (2.5). It doesn't go much further than that, for despite a deliberately provocative profornication speech that Willful delivers later, the novel is rather chaste—which is unusual with satirical novelists of Goodall's bent, though he does describe the attempted seduction of Greenland by a "son of Sodom" in more detail than other novelists dared (5.12).

Like Fielding before him, and like Sterne after (as Goodall predicts in his subtitle), the narrator distracts his readers and never lets them get "lost" in the story, constantly reminding them that they are beholding an aesthetic object, a "historical machine" as he oddly calls it (3.1). As he builds his machine, he often stops to show us the literary "parts" he's using—literary conventions, reader expectations, formal devices, etc.—mostly taken from previous novels and adapted to his own needs. He provides one memorable metafictional example of how contrived all this is after telling the story of a stagecoach driver who was unfairly fired by his employer, whom the narrator rescued from poverty by hiring him to drive the stagecoach in his novel (5.8), gleefully contradicting the narrator's repeated insistence that "our *true* romance is founded on facts" (5.11), another novelistic convention of the times. Goodall is goofily exuberant about the godlike powers of the novelist:

> No sovereign prince that ever yet was born, not even Alexander the Great, who conquered the world, could boast of half the thousand part of

> our amazing power and dominion. Nor hath any witch, fairy, cabalist, conjurer, or even the Devil himself half a quarter of the tithe of our most wonderful art and capacity! We create, fashion, and destroy what, when, where, and howsoever we please: kings, princes, lords, and beggars; kingdoms, states, commonwealths, and palaces, as quick and regular as thought can form them. Every work of whatsoever kind we usher into the world, and in whatsoever form, or with whatsoever ceremony, whether with thunder, lightning, rain, wind, or sunshine. They are all created beings of our own, and our habitations are always peopled, animated, formed, and impregnated (as this great world was first by the omnipotent Author and Donor of our unlimited prerogative) only by the sole idea, will, pleasure, and invention of our definitive and incomprehensible genius. (1.1)[237]

The Adventures of Captain Greenland doesn't live up to those grandiose claims—its characters and story-lines are unoriginal, and the long sequence on Puppet Island is merely an excuse for Goodall to mock British follies à la Swift—but it is a sightworthy milestone on the 10-year journey from *Tom Jones* to *Tristram Shandy.*

An Irishman named William Chaigneau (1709–81) joined the Fielding fold with *The History of Jack Connor* (1752), which likewise could be subtitled "In Imitation of All Those Wise, Learned, Witty, and Humourous Authors Who Either Already Have, or Hereafter May Write in the Same Style and Manner." Personable Jack Connor's career is quite similar to that of Tom Jones: born illegitimate, abandoned by his poverty-stricken family and raised in idyllic surroundings by Lord Truegood of Bounty Hall, educated as a gentleman but expelled after he's caught in bed with the schoolmaster's niece, banished to England, employed in various capacities as in picaresque novels (and which take him from Ireland to England, France, Flanders, and Spain), driven to desperate straits, and eventually identified as a relation of Lord Truegood and married to his beautiful daughter, Lady Harriot. But the narrator, who has compiled this "history" from papers left behind by Connor, gives a cheeky explanation for its resemblance to a popular 1749 novel:

> As an *historian*, I must be extremely angry with one Henry Fielding, who has wrote the memoirs of a *profligate fellow* whom he calls Tom Jones. This man has done me great injury, and I am apt to believe has seen the *materials* of this history, for in one of his volumes, he has not only copied the very long discourse Mr. Pensè made on *gaming*, but has raked together all that the *wisest* have said, or *could* say on that subject, so that he has very *unfairly* deprived me of the benefit of a dozen or twenty pages, which I must strike out or be thought a plagiary. This is not the only place where the said Fielding has curtailed my reputation and cramped my genius. Without saying more on this *barbarous* and *ungentlemanly* usage, I must insist that the good-natured public will believe I should have had *more reflections*, and have been as fertile *in wit* and *humor* as the said Fielding, had he not *cruelly* and *enviously* forestalled my invention. (1.20)

This backhanded compliment is one of many intertextual references in a novel that, like *Captain Greenland*, is based less on real life than on earlier novels. In one episode, Connor "looked on himself as Gil Blas when with the Archbishop" (2.1), and the narrator snidely alludes to other writers after he records a few pages of noisy tavern talk and then appeals to the reader:

> I hope it will not be expected I should set down minutely and in order every single word and repartee during the first half hour's conversation. The task would be too arduous even for the renowned author of *Pamela* and *Clarissa*, whose patience nothing could equal, except that of his readers. Old Bunyan would would have been at a loss, and the celebrated Mr. Cleveland would have found it impossible;[238] how therefore can I, a *weak, ignorant modern*, pretend to attempt what such *vast geniuses* must have omitted. All I am able to do is to beg the *learned reader* to supply my defects by imagining, or, *if he can*, writing about thirty pages of the most *fashionable oaths* and refined *bawdy jokes* his wit can put together. Should his thoughts not be sufficiently elevated for so *sublime* a subject, let him take the *Memoirs of a Lady of Pleasure*, whose author, as he undoubtedly merits, certainly ought to be preferred to the highest post on Hounslow, or some other convenient *heath*. (1.22)

—which is to say, he'd like to see Cleland hanged. As here, the narrator often encourages readers to use their imagination to supply further details, or to skip over uninteresting matter, or even reread early chapters as needed. Like Goodall and especially the author of *Charlotte Summers*, the narrator toys with the author–reader relationship, nowhere as ludicrously as at the conclusion of the chapter that takes Connor across the Irish Sea to England: "I hope it will not be expected I should furnish my readers with the adventures of this voyage of ten days, as there happened but the common occurrences on such occasions; but I am strongly inclined to present them, according to the practice of other *wise authors*, with a most extraordinary and surprising *dream* Jack had the first night. *He dreamed*—But I beg pardon, for I find myself at this instant so *drowsy* that I must request my kind reader will follow my example, and by taking a *nap*, dream the remainder of this chapter" (1.14). Among other innovations is Chaigneau's practice of beginning every chapter with an extract of poetry, some taken from the Scriblerians (Pope, Swift, Gay), some tagged "anonymous" that are probably Chaigneau's own inventions. Another innovation, which reflects the novel's more serious concerns, occurs just before Connor leaves Ireland for England: an advisor tells him to lose his Irish brogue and name, suggesting that he call himself Jack Conyers thereafter, and from that point on the recto running heads read "Jack Connor, now Conyers."

Born an upper-class Irishman, Connor betrays both his class and his nationality when leaves Ireland and leads a picaresque life under a phony English name. (As a servant, he later adopts the English/French name "Jack Constant," as though to recall his French Huguenot heritage.) He encounters and counters anti-Irish prejudice and eventually realizes "that in order to attain the stability he is seeking," as Ian Campbell Ross puts it, Connor "must define his identity not only spiritually or materially but in terms of nationality also" (276). (His spiritual concerns are complicated by the fact that, like Ireland itself, he is part Catholic and part Protestant.) After "Jack Conyers" marries Lady Harriot, he returns to Ireland and reclaims his original surname; "the taking of his Irish name is imbued with a symbolic significance," to quote Ross again, "for it re-establishes for himself, as well as for others, the identity he has lost, and has sought throughout the novel" (277).

The running heads don't revert to "Jack Connor" at the end, but that's about the only trick Chaigneau misses in this clever novel. He is wittily bawdy, often conflating reading/fucking: Connor loses his virginity to a girl who has him read/enact a racy French novel to/with her (an occasion for Chaigneau to parody the genre), and when he is caught in bed with her later by the schoolmaster, who thought Connor was alone turning the leaves of a textbook, he drolly remarks, "it seems you have lately passed over *other leaves* besides Greek and Latin" (1.13). The narrator includes an interpolated story à la Fielding, and gives us a preview of a 7-volume work he plans to publish entitled *Memoirs of the Parliament of Footmen*. Like *Tom Jones*, Chaigneau's novel is pleasantly didactic and demonstrates that a novel can have a serious moral purpose and still indulge in sexual/textual fun and games. (Richardson would have hated it, which is a strong recommendation.) *The History of Jack Connor* has the further distinction of being "an early and very successful attempt by an Irish writer to create within a European tradition an authentically Irish novel" (Ross, 270).

Pointedly rejecting Fielding's example, Tobias Smollett went in the opposite direction in his third novel, *The Adventures of Ferdinand Count Fathom* (1753). Complaining in his dedicatory preface that the protagonists of most recent novels "are characters of transcendent worth, conducted through the vicissitudes of fortune to that goal of happiness which ever ought to be the repose of extraordinary desert," he decided to choose his "principal character from the purlieus of treachery and fraud" (5), believing "such monsters ought to be exhibited to public view that mankind may be upon their guard against imposture" (chap. 49). A bastard born to a camp follower in Europe, Ferdinand Fathom scams his way from Hungary through France and eventually to England, where—now calling himself "Count" Fathom—he cons the upper classes and, after a spell in jail, practices as a quack doctor. Both he and Smollett portray "civilized" life as a jungle:

> He had formerly imagined, but was now fully persuaded, that the sons of men preyed upon one another, and such was the end and condition of their being. Among the principal figures of life, he observed few or no characters that did not bear a strong analogy to the savage tyrants of the wood. One resembled a tiger in fury and rapaciousness; a second prowled

> about like a hungry wolf, seeking whom he might devour; a third acted the part of a jackal in beating the bush for game to his voracious employer; and a fourth imitated the wily fox in practicing a thousand crafty ambuscades for the destruction of the ignorant and unwary. (chap. 11)[239]

Fathom's debts and crimes eventually catch up with him, and his ruin inspires, unrealistically and melodramatically, an epiphany that he's a bad person, and soon after he is rescued from grinding poverty by the same benefactor he had defrauded back in Hungary years earlier.

A throwback to 17th-century rogue biographies and novels of romantic intrigue, *Count Fathom* isn't particularly compelling, and the sappy ending depends on the dovetailing of too many wild coincidences. Smollett's style is rather stiff and formal, privileging expository prose over dialogue, and reading at times like a detailed plot summary of a novel rather than a dramatized narrative. (Lennox and even Goodall can write circles around him.) On the plus side, Smollett orchestrates a contrapuntal narrative line that contrasts Fathom's immoral acts with his benefactor's moral actions—and those of the latter's exemplary fiancée—but even this feels like a concession to the popular preference for "characters of transcendent worth." Two scenes stand out because they anticipate later genres: chapters 20–21 are set at night in a French forest, a crime scene of murder and mayhem characteristic of later German horror novels, and chapters 62–63 near the end are set in a burial vault at midnight with all the trappings of the Gothic novel (though the latter is not so much an innovation as an adaptation of a similar scene in Congreve's 1697 play, *The Mourning Bride*). Like Smollett's other novels, *Count Fathom* was written quickly and as a result contains some plot discrepancies and many anachronisms: in his introduction to the superb Georgia edition, Jerry Beasley argues that the latter represent an "adventurous experiment with the novelistic uses of history" (xxxvi), and while I'm usually quick to applaud experimentalism, in this instance it isn't very convincing. Smollett's best work still lay ahead of him.

On the other hand, Samuel Richardson's best work lay behind him by the time he brought out *The History of Sir Charles Grandison* (1753–54),

another gigantic epistolary novel. Reportedly the novel was reluctantly written by Richardson at the request of his female fans, who wanted an example of a virtuous man to set aside his portraits of virtuous women. He also wanted to portray a man who *deserved* his happy ending, unlike the protagonists "of many modern fictitious pieces" (cough!*Tom Jones*) who are "vicious, if not profligate characters."[240] For a 1,600-page novel, there's not much of a story: Harriet Byron—a rich, high-minded 20-year-old beauty cut from the same pattern as Clarissa Harlowe, though a little more human—ditches three unwanted suitors in Northamptonshire by traveling to London to stay with her cousins. There she attracts further suitors, including an alpha male named Sir Hargrave Pollexfen, a sort of Lovelace Lite. Frustrated at her repeated rejections of his marriage proposals, he kidnaps her one night from a masquerade with the idea of forcing a marriage on her by dawn. (Really, Richardson? Yet another abduction of your heroine? Is that your only move?) Harriet is rescued by the handsome, 26-year-old Sir Charles Grandison, Richardson's ideal of "a good man." He rescues her on page 130; the remainder of the long novel slowly labors toward their eventual marriage, long delayed because Sir Charles is already committed to another young woman he had rescued from an unwanted suitor, an Italian woman named Clementina della Porretta, whose family opposed their marriage because the English Protestant refused to convert to Catholicism. The family eventually changes its mind, but not bigoted Clementina, who refuses to marry a "heretic," which clears the way for Sir Charles to marry coreligionist Harriet near the end. All the minor characters are rewarded/punished per the dictates of didactic fiction.

Like Pamela and Clarissa, Harriet is a self-described "scribbler" via whom Richardson can justify his technique: "What a length I have run! How does this narrative letter-writing, if one is to enter into minute and characteristic descriptions and conversations, draw one on!" (1.13) She becomes a kind of novelist, dramatizing Sir Charles's backstory in third-person narrative form based on materials she's received, complete with dialogue. It's one of many instances where Richardson struggles against the confines of the epistolary form like a buxom woman in a corset, and has to resort to cheating: he would have us imagine his correspondents have phonographic memories that allow them to recall lengthy conversations to

the letter, and in one instance, a character takes what he admits is the "extraordinary" step of calling in a stenographer to record a conversation, only (I suspect) because Richardson couldn't figure out how otherwise to include that material. (He dislikes the kind of summary and indirect dialogue people actually employ in letters.) And as in *Clarissa*, there are some ludicrous instances where Harriet writes about events as they happen: "But a coach stops— [¶] I ran to the dining-room window. O my dear! It is a coach; but only the two ladies! Good God!—Sir Charles at this moment, at this moment, my boding heart tells me—" (1.39). One novelty Richardson introduced was an index: at Samuel Johnson's request, he had added one to the third edition of *Clarissa*, but this is the first English novel to include an index as part of the original text.[241]

Sir Charles Grandison is yet another dramatized conduct book, less an exploration of human nature (as Fielding claimed for *Tom Jones*) than a platform for Richardson's paleoconservative social views. Fielding "exhibited human nature as it is," Richardson complains in his "Concluding Note," while he exhibits human nature as it *should* be, offering Sir Charles as a Ken doll representing the ideal 18th-century gentleman. (He is the first upper-class character in English literature to sport a tan.) But the novel isn't as deadly as it sounds: the tone is lighter than his previous efforts and the dialogue more sprightly—I can see why Jane Austen loved it. Sir Charles' younger sister Charlotte is a special treat: variously described as "a very whimsical creature," a "mad girl," and "a little Satan," this fun, flippant character lights up the pages on which she appears or writes. Richardson even allows the saucebox to parody his technique, as when she writes Harriet of the time when her older sister interrupted her:

> Lady L. sends up her name. Formality in *her*, surely. I will chide her. But here she comes.—I love, Harriet, to write to the moment; that's a knack I had from you and my brother: And be sure continue it on every occasion: No *pathetic* without it!
>
> Your servant, Lady L.
>
> Your servant, Lady G.—Writing? To whom?
>
> To our Harriet—
>
> I will read your letter—Shall I?

Take it; but read it out, that I may know what I have written.

Now give it me again. I'll write down what you say to it, Lady L.

Lady L. I say you are a whimsical creature. But I don't like what you have *last* written.

Charlotte. *Last written—'Tis* down.—But why so, Lady L.?

Lady L. How can you thus tease our beloved Byron with your conjectural evils?

Charlotte. Have I supposed an impossibility.—But 'tis down—*conjectural evils*.

Lady L. If you are so whimsical, write—'My dear Miss Byron'—

Ch. My dear Miss Byron— 'Tis down.

Lady L. (looking over me) 'Do not let what this strange Charlotte has written grieve you:'—

Ch. Very well, Caroline!—*grieve you*. (6.9)

This comic sister act goes on for an entire page, evidence that Richardson could be playful. But apparently Charlotte was *too* much fun for some early readers. Lady Mary Wortley Montagu—who is caricatured as a butch lesbian in the novel—wrote that Charlotte should "have have had her [petti]coats flung over her head and her bum well whipped in the presence of her friendly confidante Harriet."[242] 'Tis a pity Richardson didn't include *that* scene – Englishwomen didn't begin to wear panties until the end of the century – for the novel has too much of the conduct-book about it, too many lectures on manners, parental obedience, marital duties, Christian principles, the evils of dueling, etc. Like Fielding's *Amelia*, *Sir Charles Grandison* holds its own with other novels of the 1750s, but not with the author's earlier work.

While Richardson was content to stick with the old epistolary form, his friend Sarah Fielding—along with her friend Jane Collier (1715–55)—decided to try something different. Their novel *The Cry: A New Dramatic Fable* (1754) is one of the most unusual novels of the 18th century, and deliberately so: They state in their introduction that "stories and novels have flowed in such abundance for these last ten years that we would wish, if possible, to strike a little out of a road already so much beaten," and "to assume a certain freedom in writing not strictly perhaps within the limits

prescribed by rules."[243] This freedom mostly has to do with form, not content. The story itself concerns a virtuous young woman named Portia (named after Shakespeare's heroine, whom she quotes at one point), who is introduced by her childhood friend Melantha to a distressed family: the widowed father, Nicanor, has financially ruined himself by running after a young woman named Cylinda (a well-read, self-proclaimed epicurean), which allows the family's despicable oldest son, Oliver, to lord it over the rest. Portia becomes friends with Oliver's younger siblings, the twins Cordelia (Shakespeare again) and Ferdinand, and gradually falls in love with the latter. Too poor to marry—which doesn't bother Portia—Ferdinand sails off to the Barbados and quickly earns a fortune, but before he returns to propose, he tests Portia first by sending false reports that he has turned into a rake. Shocked at this behavior, she renounces him and plans to hide herself in France, but a sudden, debilitating fever—common in 18th-century fiction, if not in life—delays her long enough for Ferdinand to confess his idiotic test, which she forgives as "a little too much refinement on true and delicate love" (5.4). After they marry, they are joined by Cordelia and Cylinda, who resign themselves to spinsterhood, and Oliver marries Portia's vain friend Melantha in spite.

The unoriginal story is presented in a highly original form: resembling a play in its layout, *The Cry* is a hybrid of novel, play, essay, and allegory. In the prologue, the authors invite readers to take flight "on the wings of fancy . . . into the midair, where by imagination you may form a large, stupendous castle. Within is a magnificent and spacious hall, in which behold a large assembly composed of all such tempers and dispositions as bear an inveterate hatred to truth and simplicity, and which are possessed also with a strong desire of supporting affectation and fallacy." This is the Cry: a combination of Greek chorus, courtroom jury, and theater audience. (In the 18th century, "the cry" was a term for gossip, common report, conventional wisdom.) Portia has been called to this assembly—"whether by magic, by enchantment, or what other means, let particular fancy dictate"—to explain and justify her life before an allegorical figure representing truth, Una (from Spenser's *Faerie Queen*). As Portia tells her story, the Cry frequently interrupts to mock and discredit her nuanced, psychological account of her actions and feelings, twisting her words in an attempt to prove that she's no

different or better than they are. Given their mob mentality, their remarks are usually summarized, rarely individuated—a brilliant formal stroke. When they get out of hand, Una defends Portia against the Cry as our poised heroine fulfills the intentions stated by the authors in their introduction: "Thoroughly to unfold the labyrinths of the human mind," for despite the efforts of "the best authors," "there seem yet to remain some intricate and unopened recesses in the heart of man. In order to dive into those recesses, and lay them open to the reader in a striking and intelligible manner" (14), the authors adopted this allegorical trial setting, with striking results.[244]

A recess is called at the end of part 1, which is followed by a traditional, third-person narrative of Nicanor's family history. The dramatic form returns in part 3 as Portia resumes her testimony, and not until part 4 does Cylinda come before the assembly to tell her side of the story, a fascinating account of a self-directed intellectual dilettante who flits from one philosophical system to another as a teenager, convinced that she's too smart to have to follow the same rules of honor as other girls. A sexual as well as philosophical adventuress, she meets the older Nicanor at this point, who ruins himself over the next few years in a vain attempt to convince her to marry him, which she refuses, valuing her independence. By the time Cylinda's ready to settle down with a man who once proposed to her, he has married someone else, devastating her. In the prologue to part 5, before Portia returns to the stage to finish her story, the authors offer a Fieldingesque essay in literary criticism, specifically on the use of characters and the danger of misinterpreting an author's intentions, as they felt readers did with Parson Adams in *Joseph Andrews* and in general with *Clarissa*. (In her 1749 pamphlet *Remarks on* Clarissa, Sarah Fielding dramatizes the complaints some readers made against Richardson's novel.) At this point, it's clear that the Cry also represents the book-reading public, who predictably had trouble with *The Cry*, "concluding with a general clamour against innovation and novelty" (1.11).

Given the iconoclastic social criticism that runs throughout the novel, the reactionary conclusion of *The Cry* is somewhat surprising: Portia is happy to "submit" to her husband, Cylinda is punished for being too intellectually adventurous (and for not submitting pagan authors to Christian morality, as

Portia does), and filial Cordelia fades into spinsterhood. But before that, *The Cry* is a devastating attack on the status quo represented by the Cry. The cerebral novel seethes with anger at the way conventional people decry unconventionally well-educated women, as both Fielding and Collier assuredly were, and I'm guessing that Portia's sharp retorts to the Cry represent things the authors wished they could have said in response to similar criticism and condescension in their own lives. (Both were unmarried and had to rely on others for room and board.) Cylinda is offered as an example of how women, like men, can misuse education, but Portia rejects the idea that women shouldn't be well read. She criticizes the way young girls are raised, and regards typical romantic courtship as being "treated like an idiot" (1.2). She translates what a typical man really means when making a flowery wedding proposal: "Madam, I like you (no matter whether from fortune, person, or any other motive) and it will conduce much to my pleasure and convenience if you will become my wife: that is, if you will bind yourself before God and man to obey my commands so long as I shall live. And should you after marriage be forgetful of your duty, you will then have given me a legal power of exacting as rigid a performance of it as I please" (1.3). Portia rejects the vague meanings attached to words like "friendship" and "love"—she defines the latter as: "A sympathetic liking, excited by fancy, directed by judgment, and to which is joined also a most sincere desire of the good and happiness of its object" (1.5)—and she invents her own words as needed for certain concepts. Portia often quotes Montaigne, and varies her narrative with essayistic digressions, exemplary stories, and wisps of whimsy, along with quotations from an impressive range of authors (including Henry Fielding; the unidentified quotation from "an ingenious author" that begins the prologue to part 3 is from *Tom Jones* [9.1].) Portia is seen reading *Clarissa* near the end, and like Sarah's earlier *David Simple*, *The Cry* is an innovative hybrid of the two new species of writing: more formally inventive than her brother's novels, and more psychologically astute than Richardson's. To his credit, the latter wrote to Sarah in 1757 to lament, "I cannot bear that a piece which has so much merit and novelty of design in it should slide into oblivion."[245] But slide it did, attended by the catcalls of the cry.

Like the 1960s, the 1750s was a remarkable time in England for innovation and experimentation.[246] In addition to the novels I've discussed so far, there are minor examples like the anonymous *History and Adventures of a Lady's Slippers and Shoes* (1754), "Written by Themselves," as the title page claims. The amusing novella begins with a "Preface, Introduction, Dedication, or Advertisement" only because the author notes that "every book of consequence has one," and is followed by an explanation of how the author learned from a rabbi how to listen to inanimate objects. Recording "a formal colloquy between a pair of women's shoes and slippers" (2), the novella is laced with learned wit and literary allusions, and appropriately for a story about footwear, footnotes abound. Confined neither by gender nor geography, *The Scotch Marine* (1754) is a another anonymous novel, this one concerning (per the title page) "A young lady who, secretly deserting her family, spent two years in strict amity as a man with her beloved Castor. Containing," the carnival-barking title page goes on to report, "a relation of the various fortunes she ran with him in that time, without a discovery or suspicion of her sex; her marriage afterwards with Cario, a North Briton [Scotsman] in New England; her voyage with that gentleman to this kingdom; and their adventures here, till their return to Scotland. Including a great diversity of surprising incidents."

A similar geographic range can be found in *Lydia, or Filial Piety* (1755), the second novel by a Tory satirist named John Shebbeare (1709–88). It opens "On the banks of the great river Catarakui, near the cataracts which fall with foaming thunder from the cloud-capt mountains deep embosomed in the eternal woods of America," and lingers there for a few chapters before taking ship for England. There are Fieldingesque digressions and chapter headings (e.g., chap. 15, "Introduced by a most magnificent simile, which is followed by a very learned debate, which drives two different stories out of two very indifferent heads"), and an attempt to find yet another simile for novel-writing, namely uniforming an army: that is, an author doesn't base his characters on specific individuals, just as an army tailor doesn't measure individual soldiers; both cut a variety of sizes, and "we let people choose for themselves till they are fitted" (chap. 27). In the 133rd and final chapter, Shebbeare imitates the author of *Charlotte*

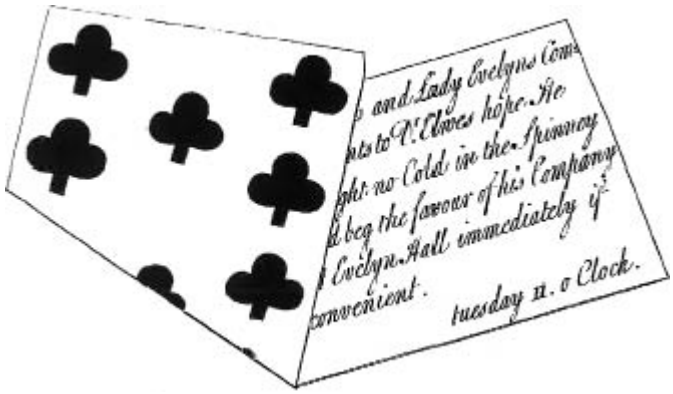
Summers by imagining the negative reactions of readers with names like Lord Bubblebett and Lady *****.

An unknown Englishman went even further afield for a setting in *A Voyage to the World in the Centre of the Earth* (1755), in which a man exploring the crater of Mount Vesuvius slips and falls down into the inner earth (or the Central World, as its inhabitants call it), where he meets with other upper worlders whose ancestors arrived there after an earthquake. (Confined to an area called the Earthly Quarter, they are naturally planning to rebel and take over the Central World.) A good third of the short novel consists of the fantastic story of an "aerial spirit" named Mr. Thompson, who was born on Jupiter, then died and went through various reincarnations —a comet, a snake, a slave on Saturn, a Yorkshire servant, a Martian—until he was reborn in the Central World as a kind of guardian angel. There are some learned footnotes, and even the kind of facetiously considerate chapter breaks used by the authors of *Charlotte Summers* and *Captain Greenland*; chapter 5 ends with: "if this is your hour of dining or supping, I will give you a fair opportunity by concluding this chapter."

The most ludic novel of the mid-1750s is *The Card* (1755) by a disreputable clergyman named John Kidgell (1722–c.1780), which in the opinion of Thomas Keymer "shares with *Tristram Shandy* the distinction of playing more systematically on its own material format than any other novel before the flurry of single-minded metafiction that developed in the 1960s" (69). *The Card* is a comedy of manners written in an archly sophisticated style about the wealthy Evelyn family, specifically two young members: Archibald, who has just left for his grand tour at the beginning of the novel, accompanied by a tutor/governor named Molesworth, and who after some youthful misadventures meets and marries a Venetian woman at the end; and his sister Evelyn, who has an understanding with Molesworth and fends off marriage proposals until he returns. (Their relationship is left unresolved; Kidgell says he'll deal with them in a sequel if this novel is successful, which it wasn't.) There's more to the story, but *The Card* is more memorable for its special features. It begins with a hand-colored frontispiece captioned with an enigmatic "explanation," followed by a 7-page poetic "Epistle to the Maker of *The Card*"—the expected Table of Contents is moved to the end as an index—and then a preface in which the author postpones explaining the title of the novel and instead offers a

preview of his stylistic diversity by retelling an anecdote in five different styles, ranging from slang to poetic fustian. Like Richardson, he provides a lengthy cast of characters, and like Fielding he indulges in facetious chapter headings. The novel even has its own theme song: near the end, the author prints the score to an Italian minuet entitled "Lo Carta," and then rearranges it as an English country dance called "The Card."

One subplot of *The Card* is launched by a notecard that one character sends to another written on the blank backside of a playing card, which the author reproduces in the hope that this novelty will save him "from total oblivion" (1.2):


and Lady Evelyns Com
hts to V. Clowes hope. He
ght no Cold in the Spinney
d beg the favour of his Company
Evelyn Hall immediately if
onvenient.
tuesday 11. o Clock.

On two occasions Kidgell switches from prose to poetry for half a page (1.35, 2.16), for no discernible reason other than he felt like it, and he also inserts two sequences of numbered letters between young woman "in imitation of an admirable writer of the present age" (2.4), one of many references to Richardson. There are numerous allusions and quotations from classical literature throughout, including one to "a curious novel called the *Iliad*" (1.33), but the most surprising allusions are to contemporary fiction. At Archy's wedding party in Venice, the author (imitating a master of ceremonies) announces the names of some distinguished English guests:

> Roderick Random, Esq; with Mrs. Booby, late Miss Pamela Andrews.
>
> Joseph Andrews, Esq; Brother to Mrs. Booby, with Miss Harriot Byron.
>
> Mr. Thomas Jones, with Miss Clarissa Harlowe.
>
> David Simple, Esq; with Miss Betsy Thoughtless.

> Sir Charles Grandison, Bart; with a lady of an illustrious family in Spain, distinguished by the name of Donna Dulcinea del Toboso. (2.27)

All goes well until they leave, at which time "Mr. Thomas Jones, in waiting on Miss Harlowe to her chair, had the imprudence to be rude to her, and Sir Charles Grandison, for interposing, the misfortune to *have his ears boxed.*"[247] It's a charming conclusion to a rather inconsequential novel, but reason enough to rescue *The Card* "from total oblivion."

And then there's the anonymous *Life and Memoirs of Ephraim Tristram Bates* (1756), a short and snappy satire of the British army remembered today because of a few aspects that anticipate *Tristram Shandy*. These include an inauspicious birth in which he is saddled with the names Ephraim Tristram, and the innovative use of asterisks to denote whispering (cf. *Tristram Shandy*, 3.17, 5.37, and 7.29), as when a senior military official warns young Bates about the politics of promotion: "Your family are first inquired into, not for their antiquity, honour, or dignity, but whether they have ever opposed certain schemes above, * * *

Tristram Bates is a passage that occurs in the first chapter: after the clergyman christens baby Bates, a young female guest named Betsey (later vilified as "an atheist, if not a papist") decides to "turn priestess" and, after gathering all the other "blooming girls and maidens fair," sneaks the baby to a deconsecrated chapel to perform a feminist christening to counteract the male one:

> The jest took, the circle was immediately formed, and off hand she made an oration, by way of parody to the doctor's prayer, that would not have disgraced even a barrister from the north for eloquence, persuasion, and harmony; and when it was necessary to sprinkle the babe of grace, still to imitate the whole ceremony, she produced a china basin of her own water, which the first peer of this kingdom would then, and now, have been glad to be sprinkled with. She touched him gently, in opposition to the hard-fisted doctor, and said, "Be wise, be happy, be brave, and be as tender to our sex, when a man, as now I am to you; be as silent of favours you may receive from us hereafter as you now are, though not so insensible and unfeeling of them; never be cruel to her who shall then be kind to you, and you will meet with kindness enough."

Bates takes this lesson to heart and becomes a man too decent to survive in a corrupt world run by men, and in the novel's final paragraph we're told "Bates's mother still says Betsey's wicked scheme ruined her son."

Facing the final page of *Ephraim Tristram Bates* is an advertisement for a forthcoming novel entitled *The History of Two Orphans* by William Toldervy (1721–62), published later in 1756. *Clarissa* had one page that folded out to a music score; this one has *nine* scattered throughout its four volumes, like having its own soundtrack, along with a short anthology's worth of famous and not-so-famous poems. (One of the latter, a couplet from Allan Ramsay's *Gentle Shepherd*, taught me a fun new word: *barlikhood*, defined by Toldervy as "a drunken passion" [3.34].) The first half of the story concerns village life in Devonshire, followed by an adventurous road trip by three fellows east to London.[248] This rambling comic novel is another manifestation of the freedom novelists felt Fielding had granted them: Toldervy imitates the master with occasional asides to

readers and critics, gentlemanly erudition, mock-epic descriptions, and facetious chapter titles (e.g., vol. 3, chap. 37: "Exhibits part of a visit at the house of Mr. Nightley; much description, and more disputation; but, like one of Butler's cantos, it breaks off in the middle"). He also felt free to indulge his interest in funerary inscriptions by giving examples at every opportunity—Toldervy had published a book a year earlier entitled *Select Epitaphs*—and to insert a chapter criticizing various English translations of the Psalms, mostly as an excuse to provide advance publicity for his mad friend Christopher Smart's version, which wouldn't appear until 1765. Like other mid-Fifties novels, *Two Orphans* is an example of how quickly once-radical innovations were added to the mainstream novelist's toolkit—Toldervy was a traveling linen salesman, not an avant-garde writer—and yet another example of the growing conviction that a "novel" could do anything and include anything the novelist wanted it to.

No one held that conviction more firmly than the Anglo-Irish writer Thomas Amory (1691?–1788), author of one of the most eccentric novels of the 18th century, *The Life of John Buncle* (1756; part 2, 1766). Alerting the reader on the first page that "he will meet with miscellany thoughts upon several subjects," the eponymous narrator lectures us on Hebrew grammar and etymology, conchology, geology, anatomy, Irish history, gardening, alchemy, mathematics, vivisection, spelunking, politics, tourism, microbiology, philosophy, antiquarianism, medicine and medicinal springs, pathology, chemistry, premature burial, diet, literary translation, botany, pharmacology, but mostly antitrinitarian theology. Amory quotes, paraphrases, and plagiarizes from hundreds of books ranging from *The Grub Street Miscellany* to Arthur Young's *Historical Dissertation on Idolatrous Corruptions in Religion from the Beginning of the World.* Like a scholarly textbook, it is divided not into chapters but into numbered memoranda, employs marginal headings, cites passages in Latin, Greek and French, includes mathematical equations, and appends dozens of erudite footnotes, some with their own footnotes. (There's one Wallace-size monster spread over *17 pages* in the original edition, with two huge footnotes of its own.) While over in France Diderot headed a team to produce his encyclopedia, Amory single-handedly produced an encyclopedic novel that encapsulates a staggering range of 18th-century topics, all filtered through the head of an admittedly "odd man," who is

happy to be called so "if oddness consists in spirit, freedom of thought, and a zeal for divine unity; in a taste for what is natural, antique, romantic, and wild; in honouring women who are admirable for goodness, letters, and arts; and in thinking, after all the scenes I have gone through, that every thing here is vanity except that *virtue* and *charity* which gives us a right to *expect beyond the grave* and procure us, in this world, the direction of infinite wisdom, the protection of infinite power, and the friendship of infinite goodness."[249] He's a Unitarian geek, and proud of it.

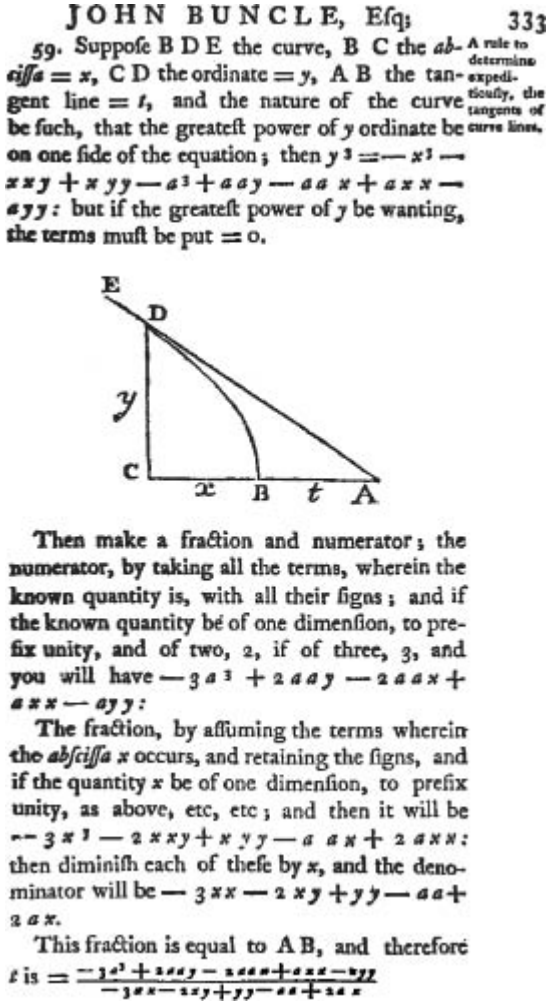
Part 1 is set mostly in the remarkable summer of 1725, when young Buncle meets and marries his first wife. After five years at Trinity College in Dublin, where he amassed a huge amount of knowledge and fell in love with an intelligent woman who died of smallpox weeks before their wedding day, Buncle returns to his home in the west of Ireland, where his father's new wife and his opposition to his son's Unitarian views drive him away. Uncertain what to do with himself, Buncle decides to visit an older college friend now living in the north of England. On the sea voyage from Ireland to England, he is impressed by a self-possessed young woman named Charlotte Melmoth, the only passenger who keeps cool during a storm at sea; she goes to bed naked during the tempest, and when her berth is flooded, Buncle rescues her and carries her "almost senseless and naked" to the deck, the beginning of a mutual admiration. After three chaste weeks on shore discussing things like "the paulo post futurum of a Greek verb" (96), they part, hoping to meet up north, where she also has a friend.

At this point, the novel transforms from bildungsroman to fantastic journey as Buncle begins exploring the mountainous wilds and bottomless lochs of Westmorland and Yorkshire in a fairytale mood. Comparing himself to "the wandering prince of Troy" (Virgil's Aeneas) and to a pre-Romantic "wanderer upon the face of the earth," Buncle encounters various utopian communities, beginning with a group of 100 women living in a kind of Shangri-la. Another community consists of 20 scientist/mathematicians, who introduce him to the wonders revealed by the microscope and discuss algebra with him. Imagine yourself a novel-reader in 1756 and encountering a page like the one reproduced on the next page! Virtually all the women Buncle meets are pious braniacs; while characters in other novels of the decade (*Sir Charles Grandison* and *The Cry* in

particular) debated whether women even needed to be educated, *John Buncle* celebrates such "Glorious women! to letters, arts, and piety they devote those hours which others waste in vanities the most senseless and despicable . . ." (222).[250] Motherless Buncle wanders through a feminine geography filled with caves, grottoes, lakes, and caverns, and is symbolically reborn when he tumbles out of a hole at the bottom of a mountain practically at the feet of two women. Under their direction, he finally makes it to his college friend's house, only to learn from his smart, beautiful sister that he's away in Italy. Deciding to find Miss Melmoth, he serendipitously runs into her near an ancient Roman monument once dedicated to a nymph—she has been searching for him too—and part 1 ends with their fairytale wedding.

Part 2 begins with the startling observation, "When I consider how happy I have been in the married state, and in a succession of seven wives never had one uneasy hour, . . . it amazes me to hear many sensible people speak with abhorrence of matrimony" (1–2). When Buncle follows this with an anecdote about a man who murdered his wife, the nervous reader expects a Bluebeard-type narrative of serial uxoricide, but instead we get the unbelievable story of a man who loses seven wives in 10 years. When Buncle's first wife dies after two years of marriage, which leaves him as desolate as "a traveler in Greenland who had lost the sun" (19), Buncle sets off like Don Quixote not "in hopes of conquering a kingdom of marrying some great princess, but to see if I could find another good country girl for a wife, and get a little money . . ." (24). As in part 1, Buncle has uncanny luck in stumbling upon isolated houses containing his ideal type: "a lady who had the head of Aristotle, the *heart* of a *primitive christian*, and the form of Venus de Medici" (162). Wife #2 is a 20-year-old beauty who wants to remain single, whom he woos by arguing that she has a *religious* duty to marry and produce a succession of "little christians" (usually lower-case in this Christian novel), and winds up his lecture with one of the oddest proposals a woman ever received: "What do you say, illustrious Statia? Shall it be a *succession*, as you are an upright Christian? And may I hope to have the high honour of sharing in the mutual satisfaction that must attend the discharge of so momentous a duty?" (48). What girl could resist that?

Statia smiles and replies, “I now declare for a *succession*” and sends for a preacher. She too dies after two years.



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59. Suppose B D E the curve, B C the *abscissa* = *x*, C D the ordinate = *y*, A B the tangent line = *t*, and the nature of the curve be such, that the greatest power of *y* ordinate be on one side of the equation; then $y^3 = -x^3 - xxy + xyy - a^3 + aay - aax + axx - ayy$: but if the greatest power of *y* be wanting, the terms must be put = 0.

A rule to determine expeditiously the tangents of curve lines.

Then make a fraction and numerator; the numerator, by taking all the terms, wherein the known quantity is, with all their signs; and if the known quantity be of one dimension, to prefix unity, and of two, 2, if of three, 3, and you will have $-3a^3 + 2aay - 2aax + axx - ayy$:

The fraction, by assuming the terms wherein the *abscissa x* occurs, and retaining the signs, and if the quantity *x* be of one dimension, to prefix unity, as above, etc, etc; and then it will be $-3x^3 - 2xxy + xyy - aax + 2axx$: then diminish each of these by *x*, and the denominator will be $-3xx - 2xy + yy - aa + 2ax$.

This fraction is equal to A B, and therefore *t* is $= \frac{-3a^3 + 2aay - 2aax + axx - xyy}{-3xx - 2xy + yy - aa + 2ax}$

Wife #3 likewise survives only two years before succumbing to smallpox like her predecessor (and like Buncle’s college fiancée), and at this point Buncle makes a chilling statement about the results of all this marital successioning: “As I mention nothing of any children by so many wives, some readers may perhaps wonder at this, and therefore to give a general answer, once for all, I think it sufficient to observe that I had a great many to carry on the *succession*; but as they never were concerned in any extraordinary affairs, nor ever did any remarkable things that I heard of—only rise and breakfast, read and saunter, drink and eat—it would not be fair, in my opinion, to make anyone pay for their history” (137). There’s no mention during the remainder of the novel what became of all these

children, or where they lived as he continued to wander the mountains of Westmorland looking for more wives. Nor does he apologize for marrying one wife so quickly after another: indeed, he boasts that, were he to live as long as the patriarchs mentioned in Genesis, "I would with rapture take hundreds of them to my breast, one after another, and piously propagate the kind" (484).

Wife #4 is another math whiz who dazzles him with her mastery of differential equations; she lasts only six months. Wife #5 dies in a carriage accident after only six weeks of marriage. Wife #6 dies two weeks after Buncle abducts her from a tyrannical father, is dug up from her grave and turned over to an anatomist, wakes up on his operating table, marries the doctor, pretends she doesn't recognize Buncle when he encounters her later at a dinner party, comes clean after her doctor husband drops dead after praising the aphrodisiac Spanish fly, marries Buncle, and dies for real a year later. (I'm not making any of this up!) Between wives 5 and 6 Buncle marries #7, daughter of a physician who teaches Buncle how to become a doctor—during his studies Buncle performs an autopsy on a female cadaver with two vaginae, and remarks, "I should not choose to marry a woman with two *vaginas*, if it was possible to know it before wedlock" (445)—and of course #7 dies in a boating accident 10 months after their wedding. Unflappable Buncle regards her death, like those of her predecessors, as a lesson from his god: "we ought to learn to give up our *own wills*, and get rid of all *eager wishes* and *violent affection*, that we may take up our *rest* wholly in that which *pleaseth* God: Carrying our submission to him so far as to bless his *correcting* hand and *kiss* that *rod* that cures our passionate eagerness, perverseness, and folly" (482). That seems to be the moral of part 2 of this Unitarian fairy tale, which breaks for digressions, lengthy poems, an episode featuring Edmund Curll (the notorious bookseller pilloried in Pope's *Dunciad*), a bibliographic essay on medical textbooks, and further "miscellany thoughts upon several subjects." After the death of wife #7, Buncle sails around the world—details of which he promises in a book entitled *The Voyages and Travels of Dr. Lorimer* (unpublished)—and returns after nine years to settle down in a cottage outside London, alone (no doubt to the relief of the educated women of Great Britain). The novel ends with an unattributed poem adapted/plagiarized from William Broome's "The Seat of the War in Flanders" (1710).

Even in a decade crowded with unconventional novels, *The Life of John Buncle* stands out. At a time when most fictional characters married only once, and remained widows if they should lose their spouse, Buncle's enthusiastic and legal bedding of one young beauty after another under the cloak of religious duty must have raised eyebrows, and envy in some male readers. While Fielding popularized digressions in fiction, no one pushed them to such extreme lengths. Other novelists were careful not to make their female characters threateningly educated, but not Amory; not only does he fill his novel with brainy young women, he appreciates the sexual appeal of intelligence. In part 1, young Buncle is turned on when his fiancée flaunts her expertise in Hebrew grammar: "my passion had risen so high for such uncommon female intelligence that I could not help snatching this beauty to my arms, and without thinking of what I did, impressed on her balmy mouth half a dozen kisses" (84).

Amory also introduced tones and modes that wouldn't be seen in novels until later. A pre-Romantic, he dwells on the picturesque and the sublime, admiring wild landscapes that induce "a horror that has something pleasing in it," and introduces many Gothic elements: skeletons, cadavers, vistas "that harrowed the soul with horror," tales of premature burial, and a house described as "the most gothick, whimsical, four-fronted thing without that ever my eyes beheld" (1:191)—which is a good description of the novel itself, along with the sentences preceding it: "The mansion had a rusticity and wildness in its aspect beyond anything I had seen, and looked like a mass of materials jumbled together without order or design. There was no appearance of rule in any part, and where a kind of proportion was to be seen, it seemed as a start into truth by the inadvertent head of blind chance." That's not necessarily pejorative, for as Moyra Haslett reveals in her voluminous annotations, those sentences are taken from a 1734 book describing Westminster Abbey. *The Life of John Buncle* is a tapestry of texts, often (as here) unidentified: a description of a garden in northern England is actually taken from a 1752 book on Chinese gardens near Beijing, and a philosophical community's library is on interlibrary loan from a 1739 book describing the original one in Italy. This is a book based on books, not on life.

Amory deliberately uses old, bookish spellings (like "gothick") and odd locutions, beginning on the first page when he introduces himself: "About

fifty years ago the midwife wheeled me in, and much sooner than half a century hence, in all probability, Death will wheel me out." (Amory was prescient: he lived to the age of 97). There are some surprisingly frank, even coarse descriptions—he knew Rabelais' work—as when Buncle says of his fiancée that her smallpox "reduced the finest human frame in the universe to the most hideous and offensive block" (1:88), or when he tells of an "old Irish knight" who married a young woman "when he was creeping upon all-fours, with snow on his head and frost in his bones, that he might lie by a naked beauty, and gaze at that awful spot he had no power to enjoy" (2:185). Buncle's strident religious beliefs are framed as components of his oddity and can't be taken seriously, especially when he abandons his considerable scientific knowledge to insist that natural disasters and floods are *literally* "caused by the immediate finger of God" (1:127). He also can't explain why an atheistic, libertine friend of his performs more kind, charitable acts than any Christian he knows. As in *Don Quixote*, there is tension throughout *John Buncle* between primitive religion and modern science, between myth and math, two irreconcilable worldviews that have made Buncle, if not mad, decidedly odd. The lengthy religious discourses almost ruin the novel, but perhaps they're just an act: at one point, when Buncle is trying to ingratiate himself with the guardian of two women he plans to abduct, he "began a story of a cock and a bull and made the old fellow grin now and then" (2:194). Perhaps that's all Amory intended in *The Life of John Buncle*: a 500-page cock and bull story, which, though not the best of its kind I ever heard, did make this old fellow grin now and then.

The fad for experimental fiction seems to have peaked with *John Buncle*, for English writers resumed writing conventional novels until 1759. Two famous novellas appeared early that year, and oh what a difference: first, Voltaire's *Candide*—fleet, fierce, and funny—and then Samuel Johnson's *Rasselas*—wooden, workmanlike, and woebegone. To alliterate further, *Candide* is vivid and visceral, *Rasselas* arid and abstract, and together they furnish a textbook example of the difference between showing and telling, and the difference between a novelist and a polemicist.

Johnson's tale begins like the legend of Buddha, who at age 29 leaves his luxuriously sheltered life and confronts the miseries of the outside world. Around the same age, the Abyssinian prince Rasselas, bored by his

pampered life in an isolated "happy valley" and longing "to see the miseries of the world, since the sight of them is necessary to happiness,"[251] escapes with his mentor Imlac and his sister Nekayah (plus her best friend, Pekuah) to visit Egypt and determine the best "choice of life" (which was Johnson's original title for the novella). Encountering various people high and low, they conclude no particular choice of life guarantees happiness, then decide to abandon their individual ambitions and trudge back to Abyssinia—or so it seems: the conclusion is famously inconclusive.

While *Rasselas* succeeds as a dour treatise on pessimism, it fails as a novel. It contains many admirable sentiments and aphoristic remarks —"Integrity without knowledge is weak and useless, and knowledge without integrity is dangerous and dreadful" (41)—but as Stein told Hemingway, remarks are not literature. Johnson's one-dimensional characters are merely wooden dummies through whom he makes his remarks, and not surprisingly they all sound like the Samuel Johnson of his *Rambler* essays. Granted, the Oriental apologue genre he adapts doesn't call for rounded characterization, but none of his faceless characters has the personality of the protagonists of similar fables by Hamilton, Crébillon, Diderot, and Voltaire. Except for the occasional aphorism, the prose is flat, at times reading like a bad translation. ("The princess and her maid turned their eyes towards every part, and, feeling nothing to bound their prospect, considered themselves as in danger of being lost in a dreary vacuity" [15]). Johnson later admitted the novella was written quickly "in the evenings of one week," and sent "to the press in portions as it was written" (Boswell, 214), and it shows. Like Goodall, he also forces too many unnecessary chapter breaks, sometimes in the middle of conversations.

Worst is Johnson's disinterest in dramatizing his material. Shortly after leaving Abyssinia, the royal party spots some shepherds and Imlac suggests interrogating them to learn if "pastoral simplicity" is the best choice of life: "The proposal pleased them, and they induced the shepherds, by small presents and familiar questions, to tell their opinion of their own state: they were so rude and ignorant, so little able to compare the good with the evil of the occupation, and so indistinct in their narratives and descriptions, that very little could be learned from them. But it was evident that their hearts were cankered with discontent; that they considered themselves as

condemned to labour for the luxury of the rich, and looked up with stupid malevolence toward those that were placed above them" (19). Disgusted, the party moves on. Now imagine how Voltaire would have handled that scene: without making it much longer, he would have individuated a few of the shepherds with telling details, allowed them a few grunts of dialogue, given them some stage business (maybe spitting or rudely eyeballing the ladies), and so on. In a word, he would have *novelized* the scene, not left it "so indistinct . . . that very little could be learned from" it. Johnson ignores similar opportunities throughout the novel, preferring to get back to his talking-heads discussions. During one of those discussions, Rasselas advices his sister not to use "examples of natural calamities, and scenes of extensive misery, which are found in books rather than in the world" (28), but see what Voltaire does with the Lisbon earthquake in *Candide*—which happened in the real world, not in a book. And to give further props to the Frenchman, *Candide* rejects optimism for realism, while *Rasselas* rejects optimism for pessimism, the other extreme, and concludes with the utterly unrealistic conviction that "the choice of life is become less important [. . . than] the choice of eternity" (48).[252]

One can make allowances for Johnson: he wrote it quickly, and nevertheless managed some impressive passages, such as Nekayah's lament for for the abducted Pekuah (35, which probably expresses Johnson's sense of loss for his mother), a crazed astronomer's account of how he learned to control the weather (41), and his regret for devoting his life to lonely academic study (41). If you read novels only for their message, *Rasselas* is a despondent call to abandon hopes, dreams, and ambitions—a kind of anti-Graduation Day speech—but if you read novels for their literary artistry, there's little on display, which is not surprising from a man who distrusted the imagination. (See chapter 44, "The Dangerous Prevalence of Imagination.") The astronomer advises Imlac, a former poet, not to "indulge thy pride by innovation" (43); no danger of that here, and fortunately that advice didn't reach an Irish-born clergyman up north in Yorkshire who, at the end of 1759, published the first two volumes of a paradigm-shifting novel Johnson later dismissed as an ephemeral oddity.

A Brief Digression on the Novel That Changed My Life

Summer of 1972, University of Northern Colorado—After my sophomore year, I switched colleges and switched majors from history to English because of my growing love for poetry, both writing and reading it. I took only poetry classes until the summer session, when none were on offer and I had to settle for a course called "Techniques of the Novel." Before then I had regarded novels merely as long stories, lacking the "craft or sullen art" of poetry (Dylan Thomas). I can't remember the first novel we read—either *Pamela* or *Joseph Andrews*—but I was impressed when my professor, Neal Cross (1910–79), diagrammed the architectural structure of *Tom Jones* on the blackboard (which I now realize was based on the blueprint reproduced earlier on p. 752). What, novels have structure, like a sonnet? Next up was *Tristram Shandy*, and that did it. It blew my mind, as we said in those days, and by the time I finished the rest of the required reading—*The Old Wives' Tale*, *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, *To the Lighthouse*, *The Sound and the Fury*—I decided to bid farewell to Dame Poetry and embrace Lord Novel. I got a B in the course.

Laurence Sterne (1713–68) published *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman* in nine small volumes over a period of eight years (vols. 1 and 2, 1759; 3–4, 1761; 5–6, 1762; 7–8, 1765; 9, 1767). If *Joseph Andrews* is the moment when the English novel switches from black and white to color, *Tristram Shandy* marks the conversion to hi-def 3D with director's commentary. I won't supply a plot summary because I assume anyone reading my eccentric book has read his—what, Madam? you've never read *Tristram Shandy*?—nor you, Sir? Then I insist you lay this book aside and read his instanter—preferably in the Penguin edition (which I cite), the closest affordable replication of the original novel's special effects—and return when you've finished. — — — — — — — — — — — — — — ticktock, ticktock, ticktock — — — — — — — — — — — — — — — — Spectacular, isn't it?! Can you believe this postmodern novel *à la lettre* was written in the 18th century? If you can't, you haven't been paying attention. Most of the novel's typographical eccentricities, digressive tendencies, and metafictional asides were first developed by Rabelais and later French novelists such as Sorel, Scarron, Furetière,[253] Subligny, Lesage, Bordelon, Marivaux, and Crébillon; by Sterne's

acknowledged Spanish master Cervantes and the unacknowledged López de Úbeda and Isla; and by Burton's *Anatomy of Melancholy* and in such English novels as Urquhart's *Jewel*, Oldys's *Fair Extravagant*, Dunton's *Voyage round the World*, Swift's *Tale of a Tub*, D'Urfey's *Essay towards the Theory of the Intelligible World*, Barker's Galesia trilogy, the Scriblerus Club's *Memoirs of Martinus Scriblerus*, the anonymous *History of the Human Heart* and *Charlotte Summers*, Goodall's *Captain Greenland*, Fielding and Collier's *Cry*, Kidgell's *Card*, the anonymous *History and Adventures of a Lady's Slippers and Shoes* and *The Life and Memoirs of Ephraim Tristram Bates*, and Amory's *John Buncle*. Sterne outdoes them all in visual gibes and gambols—the black page of mourning, the marbled page (printed in color in the first edition), the blank pages, the torn-out chapter and missequenced ones, bilingual pages *en face*, diagrams and squiggles, different fonts and point sizes, unconventional spacing—but the startling originality of *Tristram Shandy* owes more to its radical form than to its typographical whim-whams.

Tristram Shandy is about many things—pedantry, pedagogy, perception, language, sex, writing, obsessions ("hobbyhorses"), obstetrics, warfare and fortifications, time and memory, birth and death, religion, philosophy, the law, politics, solipsism, habits, chance, knots, sash-windows, chambermaids, maypoles, buttonholes, old hats—'twould be simpler to list what it *isn't* about—Tristram calls it "a cyclopædia of arts and sciences" (2.17), a *Tristrapædia* to supplant the one his father aborted—but *Tristram Shandy* is largely about the nature of consciousness. Over the centuries the novel had been moving from exteriority to interiority, from characters' public actions and pronouncements to their private thoughts and psychological struggles, though still on the conscious level. *Tristram Shandy* is the first novel to dive into the subconscious, to reveal how a thought floats in a character's mind, "without sail or ballast to it, as a simple proposition; millions of which, as your worship knows, are every day swimming quietly in the middle of the thin juice of a man's understanding, without being carried backwards or forwards, till some little gusts of passion or interest drive them to one side" (3.9). Sterne is less interested in how a man passes his life than "what passes in a man's mind" (2.2). As though responding to a rhetorical question in John Locke's *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*—"Who knows not what odd notions

many men's heads are filled with, and what strange ideas all men's brains are capable of?" (4.5.7)—Sterne not only catalogues the odd notions and strange ideas that fill the heads of his three principal characters (narrator Tristram Shandy, his father Walter, and his uncle Toby) but dramatizes how and "by what mechanism and mensurations in the brain" (3.18) those notions and ideas pass in their minds, which in turn determines the plot of *Tristram Shandy*. As Kawin observes, "What Sterne presents is a text that behaves like a mind" (243).

Here—and I should have explained this much earlier; nay, I should have done so in my previous volume—it's important to distinguish between a novel's plot and its story. The story consists merely of the events in a novel as they would occur in chronological order; the plot refers to the novelist's particular arrangement of those events.[254] If the story-events of *Tristram Shandy* were to be arranged chronologically, they would fall into three blocks of time, each focusing on one of the three principal characters (paired with a minor female character):

> 1690–1713: beginning with Toby's military service and his wounding at the battle of Namur (1695), continuing with his recuperation and growing interest in fortifications and building large-scale models with the help of his servant Trim, and ending with his aborted courtship of his next-door neighbor, the widow Wadman.
>
> 1718–1723: beginning with Walter's impregnation of his wife Elizabeth, continuing with his reaction to the baby's botched birth (broken nose and broken name—Walter's choice of Trismegistus is chopped down to Tristram), and ending with his despair after five-year-old Tristram is accidentally "circumcised," the straw that breaks Walter's back.
>
> 1759–1767: beginning and ending with Tristram's composition of his memoirs in his 40s, interrupted by a trip to France for his health, but otherwise conducted in his study in England, in the company of his beloved Jenny.

These events are scattered throughout the novel in achronological order as they occur to Tristram, for the main story concerns his trip down the stream

of consciousness. That's the *real* show: "a tragicomic performance," as Keymer bills it, "of digressive writing and progressive disease, with Tristram struggling to record his life while watching it waste away."[255] In a parody of the conventional, linear novel, Tristram pretends to begin with his birth—or more specifically, with his conception (as in *A Voyage round the World* and *Martinus Scriberus*)—but within a few paragraphs he begins digressing, back-filling, fast-forwarding, and following his thoughts wherever sudden gusts of passion or interest drive them. Although he feigns difficulty controlling his narrative, he tells us in no uncertain terms that he sacrilegiously plans to ignore Horace's *Ars Poetica* (the bible of every Western novelist before him) and "confine himself neither to his rules, nor to any man's rules that ever lived" (1.4), asking his reader to "bear with me—and let me go on, and tell my story my own way" (1.6), hoping by the end of the novel that he has taught "a lesson to the world, '*to let people tell their stories their own way*' " (9.25).

As with his typographical devices, Sterne didn't discover the subconscious, even though he seems to anticipate modern psychological concepts such as Pavlovian conditioning, Freudian slips and word association, the relativity of time, repression, and the tricks of memory. Most of this he got from Locke—whose influence on Sterne has been exaggerated; as one Sterne specialist wittily put it, "Locke may not be the key"—and the rest from Burton, Montaigne, and others going back to Lucian and Plato. His originality lay in introducing subconscious matters into fiction in the first place—aside from the occasional symbolic dream, earlier novelists didn't delve that deeply—and then letting them determine the form of his novel. That is, Sterne not only brings subconscious processes to the surface, but allows them to dart about as Tristram imagines his childhood, jumping from an anecdote about his father before Tristram was born, to a quotation from Erasmus, to a memory of his travels in France later in life, to a document he once came across among his father's papers, to an opinion on current events, to a description of his mother's eyes, to his plans for future chapters, to a remark made to Jenny—a stream of consciousness that pours through Tristram's pen without *apparent* editorial intervention. (He's artfully artless.) Gradually we realize that Tristram's adult personality is a winning combination of the best elements of his father

and uncle—he is as erudite but not as pedantic as Walter, as humane but not as naïve as Toby—a conclusion the reader arrives at by focusing as much on *how* he thinks as on *what* he thinks about.

Like most people, Tristram Shandy thinks a lot about sex, and is amused by those Tartuffes who pretend they don't and at their unwillingness to talk like adults about a basic human function. In Shandean fashion, let's start at the rear end: on the penultimate page of the 600-page novel, Walter launches into an unoriginal diatribe against sex, asking "for what reason is it, that all the parts thereof—the congredients—the preparations—the instruments, and whatever serves thereto, are so held to be conveyed to a cleanly mind by *no language*, translation, or periphrasis whatever?" (9.33, my italics).[256] The narrator, obviously a sex-positive guy, relentlessly teases those of "cleanly mind" who refuse to speak or listen to frank talk about sex by goosing them with innuendos, double entendres, censored words in asterisks, confusing pronoun antecedents ("it" refers to two different things in the hilariously euphemistic conversations between Uncle Toby and Mrs. Wadman), and words that have both denotative and connotative meanings, as when the narrator warns his female readers repeatedly against imagining that huge noses on men represent any other protuberant part of the male anatomy. A recurring ploy, played often on the long-suffering reader Tristram addresses as "Madam," is to begin to say something that seems sexually suggestive, only to finish with something quite innocent. (I always picture leering Groucho Marx and stately Margaret Dumont during those exchanges.) Tristram satirizes a class of people who insist there is no acceptable language for sex, and who even seem to believe that unmarried women and men should be sexless. (The lower classes in *Tristram Shandy*, like Toby's servant Trim and Wadman's maid Bridget, are much more comfortable talking about and apparently engaging in sex.) On the other hand, those same clean-minded people speak openly and honorably about death: in his diatribe against sex, Walter goes on (unwittingly?) to expose the hypocrisy, if not insanity, of denigrating coitus but glorifying "The act of killing and destroying a man" in the name of war, further noting "the weapons by which we do it are honorable," paraded in public, whereas the "instruments" by which we *create* a man are dishonorable and kept in darkness. If any attitude should be deplored as

indecent, depraved, and obscene—accusations flung against Sterne in his own day and still heard today on occasion—it's Walter's and Toby's conviction that it is "glorious" to kill others for what politicians call "the good of the nation" (3.22). Parson Yorick—like Tristram, one of Sterne's personae—"was rising up to batter the whole hypothesis to pieces" when the family servant Obadiah rushes in to complain of the Shandy bull's impotence, giving liberal-minded Yorick an opportunity to conclude the novel by replying to Mrs. Shandy's straight line "what is all this story about?"— [¶] A COCK and a BULL, said Yorick—And one of the best of its kind I ever heard"—a final knowing wink at those clean-minded prigs too prim to use the word *cock*, much less to admit **** **** ******** *** ********** ***.

For Sterne, sex is healthy, natural, life-affirming—witness the rapturous concluding chapter of volume 7—and in one sense *Tristram Shandy* is about the protagonist's escape from the atmosphere of sexual shame and impotence that hangs over Shandy Hall like a gravid cloud. He enjoys good-natured bawdiness, but Tristram distances himself from those with smutty, misogynous attitudes, such as a minor character he calls Phutatorius ("Fucker"), author of a "filthy and obscene treatise *de Concubinis retinendis*" (On Keeping Whores). Fearing that book "had done hurt in the world," Yorick during a supper flips a hot chestnut into Phutatorius's pants, then sarcastically advices him to treat his scalded dick by swaddling it in the newly printed sheets of a second edition of his book. In recounting the scene, Tristram takes another poke at those clean-minded people who have no language for sexual matters: the hot chestnut "fell perpendicularly into that particular aperture of Phutatorius's breeches, for which, to the shame and indelicacy of our language be it spoke, there is no chaste word throughout all Johnson's dictionary" (4.27).[257]

Tristram Shandy is all about sex—from the opening sentence's reference to Walter's monthly marital maintenance to the closing sentence's double entendre—but it's also about writing, to which Sterne brings a similar unbuttoned attitude, and in this regard it's not an exaggeration to say that he "made a more original contribution to the technique of fiction than any other single author has ever done" (Stevenson, 129–30). It remains an open question whether Sterne deliberately set out to revolutionize the novel, or to

revamp the genre of learned wit as practiced by Erasmus, Rabelais, Montaigne, Burton, and Swift, but he clearly invented "a new species of writing"—"my work is of a species by itself," Tristram boasts (1.22)—and introduced radically new innovations in style, character, structure, and fictional time. The fresh style jumps out from the first page—especially if read on the heels of Johnson's stodgy *Rasselas*—as the narrator jokes about prenatal influences while his parents engage in sex:

> Believe me, good folks, this is not so inconsiderable a thing as many of you may think it;—you have all, I dare say, heard of the animal spirits, as how they are transfused from father to son, &c. &c.—and a great deal to that purpose:—Well, you may take my word, that nine parts in ten of a man's sense or his nonsense, his successes and miscarriages in this world depend upon their motions and activity, and the different tracks and trains you put them into; so that when they are once set a-going, whether right or wrong, 'tis not a halfpenny matter,—away they go cluttering like hey-go-mad; and by treading the same steps over and over again, they presently make a road of it, as plain and as smooth as a garden-walk, which, when they are once used to, the Devil himself sometimes shall not be able to drive them off it.
>
> *Pray, my dear*, quoth by mother, *have you not forgot to wind up the clock?—Good G—!* cried my father, making an exclamation, but taking care to moderate his voice at the same time,—*Did ever woman, since the creation of the world, interrupt a man with such a silly question?* Pray, what was your father saying?—Nothing.

Note the breezy address, the "&c. &c." and extralong dashes, the slang, the hey-go-mad paratactic sentence structures, the baffling conversation at the end between mother, father, reader, and author. Did ever author, since the creation of the world, conclude an opening chapter thus? Though there are a few precedents for the style—Urquhart's Rabelais, Dunton's *Voyage*, Voltaire's *Candide* (mentioned in 1.9)—no previous English novelist made such elastic use of the language, put it through so many hoops, or used as many registers, from Augustan formality to kitchen informality, from Church Latin to French slang. He uses every rhetorical trick in the book, and even names many of them for us: epiphonema, erotesis, apostrophe,

aposiopesis, catachresis, &c. &c. He turns nouns into verbs—"she would not heroine it" (1.18); "depress'd and Nicodemus'd into nothing" (1.19)—nouns into adjectives—"bleak and decemberly nights" (8.9)—and turns almost any word into a metaphor, then plays upon its literal and figurative senses. Sterne's style is a textbook example of what Cyril Connolly described as the "Mandarin dialect": "It is characterized by long sentences with many dependent clauses, by the use of the subjunctive and conditional, by exclamations and interjections, quotations, allusions, metaphors, long images, Latin terminology, subtlety and conceits" (18). Tristram speaks of "the precise line of beauty in the sentence" (2.6) and gives us more distinctive sentences per page than almost any other novelist. They range from onomatopoeic silliness like this—

> Ptr . . r . . r . . ing—twing—twang—prut—trut—'tis a cursed bad fiddle.—Do you know whether my fiddle's in tune or no?—trut . . prut . . —They should be *fifths*.—'Tis wickedly strung—tr . . . a.e.i.o.u.-twang.—The bridge is a mile too high, and the sound-post absolutely down,—else—trut . . prut—hark! 'tis not so bad a tone.—Diddle diddle, diddle diddle, diddle diddle, dum. (5.15)[258]

—to heartrending sentences like this (which Thomas Jefferson loved):

> Time wastes too fast: every letter I trace tells me with what rapidity Life follows my pen; the days and hours of it, more precious, my dear Jenny! than the rubies about thy neck, are flying over our heads like light clouds of a windy day, never to return more—every thing presses on—whilst thou are twisting that lock,—see! it grows grey; and every time I kiss thy hand to bid adieu, and every absence which follows it, are preludes to that eternal separation which we are shortly to make.— (9.8; Sterne died a year and a half after writing that passage)

Despite the improvisatory feel of the style, Tristram chooses his words carefully, as Sterne indicates early on in what might be a parody of Richardson's "writing to the moment"; mark below how Tristram writes the word *current* then becomes distracted as he continues to paraphrase his

father's views because he realizes that's not the word Walter would have used:

> [My father] was very sensible that all political writers upon the subject had unanimously agreed and lamented, from the beginning of Queen Elizabeth's reign down to his own time, that the current of men and money towards the metropolis, upon one frivolous errand or another,—set in so strong,—as to become dangerous to our civil rights;— tho', by the bye,—a *current* was not the image he took most delight in,—a *distemper* was here his favourite metaphor, and he would run it down into a perfect allegory, by maintaining it was identically the same in the body national as in the body natural . . . (1.18)

Tristram never lets us forget he's writing this memoir: he often stops to address the reader, explain why he's telling the story the way he does, and sometimes even notes the exact date on which he is writing. In one dizzying instance, he notes how his writing self simultaneously occupies several moments in time, anticipating Marcel's revelations at the end of *In Search of Lost Time*: "I am this moment walking across the market-place of Auxerre with my father and my uncle, in our way back to dinner—and I am this moment also entering Lyons with my postchaise broke into a thousand pieces—and I am moreover this moment in a handsome pavillion . . . where I now sit rhapsodizing all these affairs" (7.28). No novel is so ostentatiously *performed* as this one, starring a narrator wearing a fool's cap and bells who cracks wise and juggles words for us, keeping several narrative lines going simultaneously like those performers who spin plates on the top of poles, filling his foolscap with bells and whistles and the encyclopedic contents of his mind. (For Walter, erudition provides rules for living; for Tristram, it provides straight lines for satire.) Backstage, however, the jester weeps:

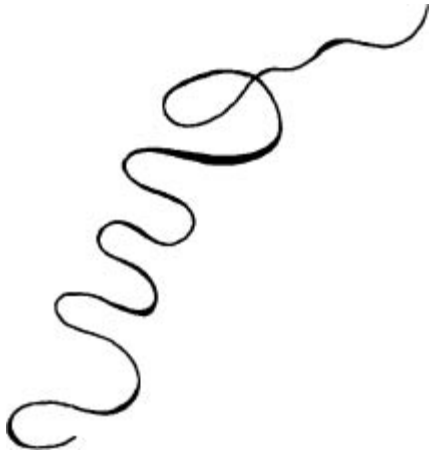
> Every line I write, I feel an abatement of the quickness of my pulse, and of that careless alacrity with it, which every day of my life prompts me to say and write a thousand things I should not.—And this moment that I last dipp'd my pen into my ink, I could not help taking notice what a cautious air of sad composure and solemnity there appear'd in my manner of doing it.—Lord! how different from the rash jerks, and hare-

> brain'd squirts thou art wont, Tristram! to transact it with in other humours,—dropping thy pen,—spurting thy ink about thy table and thy books,—as if thy pen and thy ink, thy books and thy furniture cost thee nothing. (3.28)[259]

For most novelists, "action is character," as F. Scott Fitzgerald said, but Tristram rarely acts in the literal sense in *Tristram Shandy*. He appears briefly in 5.17 at age 5 during "the misadventure of the sash," even more briefly in 1.11 around age 23 in Denmark, and throughout volume 7 in his mid-40s as he flees "Death himself" by traveling in France. His principal action is writing, and his manner of writing—as much as his matter—characterizes him for the reader. Along similar lines, Walter, Toby, and Yorick are characterized almost entirely by their obsessions and opinions, not by their actions. And what characters! While earlier novelists created admirable, ridiculous, or detestable characters, Sterne was the first to create *lovable* ones, which is not as inconsequential as it sounds, especially in a novel that strikes many readers as forbiddingly intellectual. Walter is the kind of undisciplined thinker Swift reviled, Toby is dumb as a post, and Yorick is self-destructively irresponsible, yet Sterne infuses them with such humanity that even the king of Brobdingnag would be charmed. They grow on us, as apparently they grew on Sterne during the course of composition.[260] Tristram finds the fun in dysfunctional family even as he deals with the damage done to him, one of the many reasons *Tristram Shandy* feels so modern.[261] I calculated earlier in a footnote that 90 percent of the characters in 18th-century British novels are detestable, and most of the 10 percent who are aren't aren't all that appealing. I wouldn't want to spend five minutes with Robinson Crusoe or Lemuel Gulliver or David Simple or Clarissa Harlowe, or even Parson Adams—Fanny Hill is a different matter—but I could live forever in Shandy Hall, listening to Walter dissertate on whatever, Toby reenact the siege of Namur, Yorick scatter his wit and humor, and to Trim finish his "Story of the King of Bohemia and His Seven Castles."[262] Upending yet another fictional convention, Sterne reverses those percentages: only about 10 percent of his characters are detestable—Phutatorius, Dr. Slop, Yorick's nameless enemies—and while Sterne's female characters are rather sketchy—as

though Tristram agreed with Pope that "Most women have no character"—this is a novel about hobbyhorses, which most women are too sensible to mount.

Sterne's characters reveal themselves more by words than actions, but to avoid the static talking-heads mode, he pays comically close attention to their body language as well. No previous novelist, as Shklovsky noted (152), devoted as many words to describing gestures, postures, and physical movements as Sterne. He spends a page and a half describing the position Trim assumes to read one of Yorick's sermons aloud, "otherwise he will naturally stand represented, by your imagination, in an uneasy posture,—stiff,—perpendicular" (2.17).[263] Tristram spends four *chapters* describing his father's contorted effort to reach with his left hand a handkerchief in his lower right coat pocket, using the awkward gesture to illustrate the philosophical relation between mind and body. After Walter learns that baby Tristram's nose has been crushed during childbirth, he throws himself in despair facedown on his bed, and after Tristram describes the exact position of his face and limbs, he writes "I must leave him upon the bed for half an hour" to explain the cause of his father's despair, not allowing him to rise until 55 pages later, at which point we get another detailed description of his rising, for "Attitudes are nothing, madam,—'tis the transition from one attitude to another—like the preparation and resolution of the discord into harmony, which is all in all" (4.6). We can restate Fitzgerald's axiom as "gesture is character." Tristram assigns so much importance to gestures and nonverbal forms of communication that when Trim represents the freedom of bachelorhood by "a flourish with his stick thus—



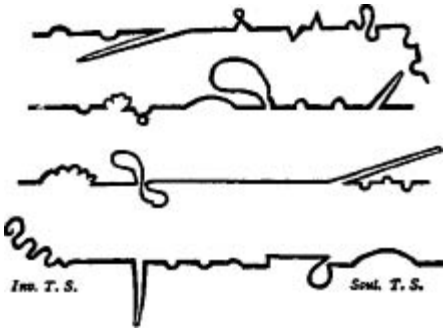
Tristram avers, “A thousand of my father’s most subtle syllogisms could not have said more for celibacy” (9.4). When Walter laughs he “clapp’d both hands upon his cod-piece” (7.27), and a thousand of his syllogisms could not have said more about the relationship between joy and sex. Sterne is not privileging body language over spoken, but closely observed gestures are among the circumstantial details that make *Tristram Shandy* so richly realistic, far more so than other so-called realistic novels of the time. “It records the play of mind of one man living in eighteenth-century England, and those objects—fiddles, ditties, clocks, door-hinges—which have chanced to impinge on his awareness,” Stephen Werner notes in his richly detailed arabesque on *Tristram Shandy* (89). Note the physical details here as the brothers Shandy wait downstairs while upstairs Mrs. Shandy is in labor:

> —I wonder what’s all that noise, and running backwards and forwards for, above stairs, quoth my father, addressing himself, after an hour and a half’s silence, to my uncle Toby,—who you must know, was sitting on the opposite side of the fire, smoking his social pipe all the time, in mute contemplation of a new pair of black-plush-breeches which he had got on;—What can they be doing brother? quoth my father,—we can scarce hear ourselves talk.
>
> I think, replied my uncle Toby, taking his pipe from his mouth, and striking the head of it two or three times upon the nail of his left thumb, as he began his sentence,— (1.21)

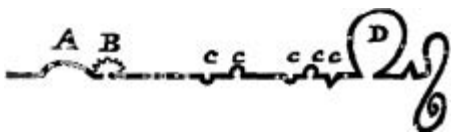
What novelist before this would have shown a character “in mute contemplation of a new pair of black-plush-breeches which he had got on,” or detail how many times and upon which fingernail he taps his pipe? (Not to mention have Walter complain “we can scarce hear ourselves talk” after “an hour and half’s silence” and “mute contemplation.” Hilarious.) What novelist before this went into anatomical detail about childbirth, including a black-comic demonstration of the use of forceps to extract a baby’s head? Such details are common enough nowadays in fiction that we read right past them in Sterne without realizing how uncommon they were in his day.

And what novelist before this would interrupt a character midsentence and not let him complete it until 30 pages later, only to have him say “it

would not be amiss, brother, if we rung the bell" (2.6). Plot-time and story-time run on separate tracks at different rates of speed as Tristram jumps back and forth between the two, attending to various narrative matters as his fancy takes him, explaining that "my work is digressive, and it is progressive too,—*and at the same time*" (1.22, my italics). That is, the *plot* progresses even as the *story* seems to regress or go into a narrative cul de sac. Tristan compares his method to the apparent retrograde motion of certain planets, which from our perspective seem to be moving backward only because some orbit more slowly around the sun than the earth does. It's a matter of perspective, and just as the Copernican system forced people to look at the universe in a new way, what Tristram proudly calls "the Shandean System" forces us to look at narrative in a new way. It doesn't have to be linear; story events can be taken out of chronological order and be resequenced thematically, or psychologically, or geographically, or alphabetically, or per any other other system.[264] At the end of volume 6, Tristram pretends to apologize for his narrative drunk driving and states that "by the help of a vegetable diet, with a few of the cold seeds, I make no doubt but I shall be able to go on with my uncle Toby's story [the long-delayed account of his courtship of Mrs. Wadman], and my own, in a tolerable straight line" (6.40), like a sober-minded conventional novel. He sheepishly apologizes for the reckless narrative lines of his first four volumes, which he diagrams for us:



Like a recovering alcoholic, he claims to have walked a straighter line in volume 5, falling off the narrative wagon only a few times:



With a new sponsor, he hopes "by the good leave of his grace of Benevento's devils" that his narrative line will be as straight as a ruler by the end of the novel, and while volume 7 is tolerably linear, Tristram admits at the beginning of volume 8 that he just can't keep to the straight and narrow, and starts hitting the bottle of frisky digressions and "fresh experiments" (8.6), relying on his "religious" method of composition: "I begin with writing the first sentence—and trusting to Almighty God for the second" (8.1). The narrative line thereafter weaves back and forth—Trim's flourish appears in book 9, summing up the zigzagging movement of the entire novel—and the bender finally stops at a point *before* the first page of the novel. The novel ends in 1714, four years before Tristram is conceived.

The sheer novelty of the first two volumes made *Tristram Shandy* a hit when they were reprinted in London in early 1760—the first edition was published by a small press in York after a London publisher rejected it as commercially unfeasible—and as with *Pamela* 20 years earlier, copycats from the back alleys of Grub Street pounced on its most superficial features and rushed imitations into print. A guy named John Carr published a fake volume 3 of *Tristram Shandy* four months before Sterne published the real one, and in 1766 another hack published a volume 9 nearly a year before Sterne's final volume appeared. Other parodies, imitations, and rip-offs continued to appear until the end of the century.[265] Legitimate novelists were slower to appreciate Sterne's innovations in style, character, and structure, and adapt them for their own aesthetic purposes. The earliest appeared not in England but in Europe: after Voltaire read the first volumes of *Tristram Shandy* in 1760 and pronounced it "a very unaccountable book; an original," he went on to write some quirky novellas following the "Shandean System" such as *Potpourri* (1765, though this one owes more to *A Tale of a Tub*), *The Man with Forty Crowns* (1768), and especially *Lord Chesterfield's Ears* (1775). In the 1770s Denis Diderot, who had met Sterne in Paris in 1762, began writing *Jacques the Fatalist and His Master*, the first major novel inspired by *Tristram Shandy*, and in the final decade of the 18th century Xavier de Maistre took the reader on a Shandean *Voyage around My Room*. By then a number of German novelists had written Sternean novels—Wieland, Nicolai, Hippel, Wezel, Richter—along with the American novelist Hugh Henry Brackenridge.

Beginning in the 19th century, the trickle turned into a stream: the *Shandy* family genes can be detected in Charles Lucas's *Infernal Quixote* (1801), Nicolai Wergeland's *Petty Incidents in the Life of Haldor Smek* (1805–10), Washington Irving's *History of New York* (1809), Ferenc Verseghy's *Merry Life and Ridiculous Opinions of Gergely Kolomposi Szarvas* (1814–15), Thomas Love Peacock's *Headlong Hall* (1815), Lord Byron's verse-novel *Don Juan* (1818–23), which he called "a poetical *T Shandy*," E. T. A. Hoffmann's *Life and Opinions of the Tomcat Murr* (1820–22), several of American John Neal's novels (*Randolph*, *Errata*, *Authorship*), Yakov de Sanglen's *Life and Opinions of a New Tristram* (1825), Charles Nodier's *Story of the King of Bohemia and His Seven Castles* (1830), 19-year-old Karl Marx's *Scorpion and Felix* (1837, unfortunately incomplete), Robert Southey's *Doctor* (1834–47), Thomas Carlyle's *Sartor Resartus* (1836), Nicolai Gogol's "Nose" (1836; Pushkin called Gogol "the Russian Sterne"), Søren Kierkegaard's *Either-Or*/*Stages on Life's Way* diptych (1843–45),[266] Almedia Garrett's *Travels in My Homeland* (1846), Herman Melville's *Mardi* (1849) and *Moby-Dick* (1851), Lewis Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland* (1865, 1871), Ippolito Nievo's *Castle of Fratta* (1867) and earlier novels; Júlio Dinis's *English Family* (1868), Carlo Dossi's *Life of Alberto Pisani* (1870), Gustave Flaubert's *Bouvard and Pécuchet* (1881), and in Joaquim Machado de Assis's later novels. By the end of the century, Sterne's spawn could be found throughout continental Europe, Scandinavia, and Russia.[267]

In the 20th century,
the stream widened into a river,
beginning with Natsume Soseki's
I Am a Cat,[268] and including Miguel
de Unamuno's *Mist*, Andrei Bely's
Petersburg, James Joyce's *Ulysses*
and *Finnegans Wake* (he cited Sterne
when describing the latter), Viktor
Shklovsky's *Sentimental Journey*, Italo
Svevo's *Confessions of Zeno*, Andre Gide's
Counterfeiters, Luigi Pirandello's *One, No*
One, and One Hundred Thousand, Alfred Döblin's

Berlin Alexanderplatz, Stanislaw Witkiewicz's *Insatiability*, Miklós Szentkuthy's *Prae*, John Dos Passos's *USA*, Juan Filloy's *Op Oloop* and *Faction*, Philip Wylie's *Finnley Wren* and *Opus 21*, Witold Gombrowicz's *Ferdydurke*, Vladimir Nabokov's *Real Life of Sebastian Knight*, Flann O'Brien's *At Swim-Two-Birds*, Mikhail Bulgakov's *Master and Margarita*, Macedonio Fernandez's *Museum of Eterna's Novel*, Kenneth Patchen's *Journal of Albion Moonlight*, Thomas Mann's *Doctor Faustus*, Felipe Alfau's *Chromos*, Louis Paul Boon's *Summer in Termuren*, Günter Grass's *Tin Drum* and *The Flounder*, Jack Kerouac's *Old Angel Midnight* ("And Tristram Shraundy Shern, marvelous book"), Julio Cortázar's *Hopscotch*, Guillermo Cabrera Infante's *Three Trapped Tigers*, Richard Brautigan's *Trout Fishing in America*, William H. Gass's *Willie Masters' Lonesome Wife* and *The Tunnel*; Steve Katz's *Exagggerations of Peter Prince*, Venedikt Erofeev's *Moscow to the End of the Line*, Ronald Sukenick's *Up*, Kurt Vonnegut's *Slaughterhouse-Five*, Donald Harington's *Some Other Place. The Right Place*., Chandler Brossard's *A Chimney Sweep Comes Clean*, Severo Sarduy's *Cobra*, Thomas Pynchon's *Gravity's Rainbow*, Augusto Roa Bastos's *I the Supreme*, José Lezama Lima's *Paradiso*, Raymond Federman's *Take It or Leave It*, Juan Goytisolo's *Juan the Landless*, Fernando del Paso's *Palinuro of Mexico*, Arno Schmidt's *Evening Edged in Gold*, Portuguese collaborators Manuel da Silva Ramos and Alface's experimental novels, David Markson's *Springer's Progress*, Georges Perec's *Life A User's Manual*, Ignácio de Loyola Brandão's *Zero*, Italo Calvino's *If on a winter's night a traveler*, Alfredo Bryce Echenique's *A World for Julius*, Gilbert Sorrentino's *Mulligan Stew*, Alexander

Theroux's *Darconville's Cat*, D. Keith Mano's *Take Five*, Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children*, Genichiro Takahashi's *Sayonora, Gangsters*, Julián Ríos's *Larva*, Alasdair Gray's *1982, Janine* and *Old Men in Love*, Aldo Busi's *Standard Life of an Ordinary Pantyhose Salesman*, George Garrett's *Poison Pen*, Carlos Fuentes's *Christopher Unborn*, Jacques Roubaud's *Great Fire of London*, Fernando Arrabal's *Extravagant Crusade of a Castrated Man in Love*, Thomas McGonigle's *Going to Patchogue*, David Foster Wallace's novels and some of William T. Vollmann's, Héctor Abad Faciolince's *Joy of Being Awake*, Javier Marías's *Dark Back of Time* (written after he had translated *Tristram Shandy* into Spanish), Haruki Murakami's *Wind-up Bird Chronicle*, Matthew Remski's *Silver*, Walter Moers's *13½ Lives of Captain Bluebear*, Joseph Heller's *Portrait of an Artist, as an Old Man*, several of Percival Everett's novels, Daniel Sada's *Porque parece mentira la verdad nunca se sabe*, Mark Z. Danielewski's *House of Leaves*, Robert Juan-Cantavella's *Otro*, Per Højholt's *Auricula*, Robert Coover's *Lucky Pierre*, Steve Tomasula's *VAS*, Enrique Vila-Matas's *Montano's Malady*, Jasper Fforde's ffictions, Gordon Sheppard's *Ha!*, Paul Anderson's *Hunger's Brides*, Adam Thirwell's *Politics*,[269] Jeff VanderMeer's *City of Saints and Madmen*, James McCourt's *Now Voyagers*, Joshua Cohen's *Cadenza for the Schneidermann Violin Concerto*, Evan Dara's *Easy Chain*, Lee Henderson's *Man Game*, Benjamin Zucker's talmudic trilogy, Matthew Roberson's *Impotent*, John McGreal's *Book of It*, Lawrence Sutin's *When to Go into the Water*, Adam Levin's *Instructions*, Arthur Phillips's *Tragedy of Arthur*, Sergio De La Pava's *Personae*, Tom

Carson's *Daisy Buchanan's Daughter*, Jan Brandt's *Gegen die Welt*, Mark Leyner's *Sugar Frosted Nutsack*, Will Self's *Umbrella*, Chris Eaton's *Chris Eaton*—I'll stop there, for as Calvino wrote in 1981, *Tristram Shandy* is the "undoubted progenitor of all avant-garde novels of our century."[270]

All these novels exhibit various features of *Tristram Shandy*—nonlinear structure, heterogeneous textual matter, self-reflexive narration, linguistic flair, intertextuality, sometimes its "Mandarin" style and/or eccentric typography—but before them other, more mainstream novelists such as Balzac, Dickens, Tolstoy, Eliot, and Twain were influenced by Sterne's less obvious but equally important innovations in characterization, tone, realistic detail, body language, and psychological motivation. And virtually all literary novelists since then have built upon *those* writers. In 1831 Balzac adopted Trim's squiggly flourish as the epigraph to his novel *The Wild Ass's Skin*, and after that date there are few Western novelists who can't be linked by three degrees of separation or fewer to Laurence Sterne.

If not by way of his masterpiece, then via the short novel he published three weeks before his death, *A Sentimental Journey through France and Italy* (1768). If Sterne had never written *Tristram Shandy*, he would deserve to be celebrated for this cunning little masterpiece. A minimalist companion volume to the maximalist earlier novel, it concerns a trip Parson Yorick makes to France about two years after Tristram's headlong tour in volume 7 (though the time-schemes of the two novels make this impossible; Sterne doesn't care), beginning in Calais in May and concluding near the border of Italy that autumn during vintage season. But where Tristram raced, Yorick idles, enjoying idyllic moments that further his sentimental education. As in *Tristram Shandy*, Sterne dramatizes the relativity of time: it comes as a surprise both to Yorick and the reader that the first 17 chapters occupy only an hour's time, and the novel is made up of similar brief encounters in which Yorick's inherent sentimentalism is put to the test, meaning his capacity for empathy.[271] Yorick fails the first test when he rejects a monk's request for alms with sarcasm; he quickly repents, admitting "I have only just set out upon my travels; and shall learn better manners as I get along."[272]

Yorick passes his next test, largely because it involves an attractive young woman rather than an old monk, and throughout the short novel he seeks

out pretty women to administer further tests. Adam Thirwell puts it too bluntly when he says that *A Sentimental Journey* is about "sexual tourism," about "knowing which girl to pick up" (172), but he's not completely off base. After all, in a 1764 letter Sterne *did* refer to France as "foutre-land" (Fuckland). Shortly after arriving in Paris, Yorick decides to visit the Opéra Comique, and stepping outside his hotel, he casts his "eye into half a dozen shops as I came along in search of a face" to give him directions, and stops at the first one with a pretty face. Over the next three chapters, he stiffens his sentiments with delicious flirting, taking the pulse of "the beautiful Grisset" and slipping his hand into her proffered glove; she's married, and they agree not to literalize the symbolic gesture: "She held it open—my hand slipp'd into it at once—It will not do, said I, shaking my head a little —No, said she, doing the same thing" (78). The sexual frisson sizzles in a longer encounter with a young woman he had spotted in a bookstore buying Crébillon's *Wayward Head and Heart*: after he flirts with her and suggestively inserts a coin into her open purse, she visits him in his hotel room; she again suggestively offers to hold an inkpot while he dips his pen in, and when Yorick notes he has nothing to write upon, "Write it, said she, simply, upon any thing.— [¶] I was just going to cry out, Then I will write it, fair girl! upon thy lips" (129). As he attempts to buckle her shoe he accidentally tumbles her back onto his bed, "and then—" the chapter breaks off (130). The next chapter is entitled "The Conquest," and it's deliberately ambiguous whether it refers to a sexual contest or a moral one. Tiring of Paris, Yorick heads south for a "riot of the affections" similar to those Tristram experienced in the concluding chapter of volume 7, and in fact Yorick seeks out the beautiful but mad girl named Maria that Tristram had encountered (9.24), empathizing with her problems even as he admires how hot she is. The novel ends with a final test of Yorick's sentiments when he is forced to share a room at night with yet another attractive woman and her prettier *fille de chambre*, a farcical face-off between ethics and erotics with no indication which side wins—or rather, which sides dominates, for the point of the novel is that they're both on the same side in a maturely sentimental person.

Yorick knows it is scandalous to suggest sexual allure plays a role in moral improvement, that there is often a "sexual motive for the moment of spiritual good" to quote Thirwell again (173), but he also knows it is

hypocritical and obtuse to pretend otherwise. It's no coincidence that moral instructors like Richardson's Pamela and Clarissa, Smollett's Narcissa, Fielding's Amelia, Buncle's beautiful braniacs, et al., are also sexually alluring, so Sterne teases "tartufish" (30) readers by way of hints, suggestions, double entendres, and innuendos insinuating a connection between sex and sentiment, from the novel's enigmatic opening sentence "—They order, said I, this matter better in France—" (we're never told what exactly "this matter" is) to its concluding ellipsis: "So that when I stretched out my hand, I caught hold of the Fille de Chambre's " [273] Yorick keeps us guessing until the end whether he's sincere or not: every sentimental epiphany is followed by a sensual afterthought, every self-congratulatory confirmation of the existence of his soul followed by a concupiscent glance at the next pretty face.

As the novel's full title indicates, Sterne intended to add a second half that would take Yorick to Italy, but died before he could write it. But even this incomplete novel is a complete triumph, another breakthrough in English fiction. Describing it to his daughter in a letter (23 February 1767), he boasted, "I have laid a plan for something new, quite out of the beaten track," and lets Yorick metafictionally draw attention to the "*Novelty of my vehicle*" (16). The novelty consists partly in writing a travel novel that is more about what passes in a man's mind than what sights he passes, but mostly in the delightfully oblique style: the ever-shifting levels of irony, the daisy chain of self-praising/self-deprecating remarks, the interleaving of biblical rhetoric and bons mots, the Anglicization of French idioms, the sly indirection, the "translations" of body language, the throwaway characterizations—"two upright vestal sisters, unsapp'd by caresses, unbroke in upon by tender salutations" (149)—a flirty, squiggling manner that never allows the reader to get a firm grip on the narrator's true feelings, to catch hold of Yorick's

If this chapter were a novel—and it's growing as long as one—then *Tristram Shandy* would be the climax, and what follows the denouement. It's the last great masterpiece of 18th-century British fiction (save one), and in older literary histories, the 40-year period between the publication of the

other one, Smollett's *Humphry Clinker* (1771), and Jane Austen's first novel, *Sense and Sensibility* (1811), was considered the British novel's wilderness years; "after *Tristram Shandy*, it may be said [by McKeon, 419], the young genre settles down to a more deliberate and studied recapitulation of the same ground" plowed by earlier innovators. But it wasn't a fallow period; authors explored various genres and modes, and though the results are not as impressive as the novels that came before, or that were written during the same period in Germany and France, they do have a small place in the history of the novel.[274] Consequently, I will deal only briefly with the noteworthy British novels of the last part of the century, even though, from a different critical perspective, many of these deserve to be more than briefly noted. For convenience they are grouped into genres, and like *Tristram Shandy*, this will entail some chronological zigzagging.

QUIXOTIC QUESTS

A "more deliberate and studied recapitulation of the same ground" first seeded by Cervantes is what followed Tobias Smollett's 1755 translation of *Don Quixote*, still considered the best in English by some (like Carlos Fuentes and Salman Rushdie). The popular concept of the Quixotic hero—a comic if not crazy idealist—had been maintained from Robert Anton's *Moriomachia* to Charlotte Lennox's *Female Quixote*, and the Cervantine style wielded brilliantly by Fielding and Sterne, but during the last part of the 18th century novelists began watering down the concept and letting the blade of Cervantic wit and irony grow dull and rusty.

Though obviously a great admirer of *Don Quixote*, Smollett simplified the complexity of the original in his fourth novel, *The Life and Adventures of Sir Launcelot Greaves* (1760–62). This was the first English novel to be serialized with illustrations before book publication, and reads like something written for a magazine audience, complete with cliffhanging endings to each chapter. Disappointed when his hopes to marry the beautiful Aurelia Darnel are dashed by her dastardly guardian, 30-year-old Sir Launcelot Greaves decides to distract himself by donning his great-grandfather's armor and sallying forth on his steed Bronzomarte "to honour and assert the efforts of virtue; to combat vice in all her forms, redress

injuries, chastise oppression, protect the helpless and forlorn, relieve the indigent, exert my best endeavours in the cause of innocence and beauty, and dedicate my talents, such as they are, to the service of my country."[275] Although the narrator asserts that one can tell from his eyes that "his reason was a little discomposed," and his Sancho Panzan squire agrees he "ran mad for a wench" (22), he bears little resemblance to his seriously deluded, book-mad predecessors in *The Extravagant Shepherd*, *The Mock Clelia*, *Pharsamond*, and *The Female Quixote*. Sir Launcelot is a sensible, public-spirited man who later admits his knight-errancy was just a "frolic," which he abandons as soon as he realizes it "might have very serious consequences with respect to his future life and fortune" (23). After a month of playing a costumed vigilante, he arranges to rescue Aurelia—by legal means, not chivalric—and marries her.

It's a mildly amusing novel, with some knockabout farce among the minor characters—two of whom imitate the protagonist and become knights—and comes stocked with Smollett's specialties: phonetically rendered dialect, an ex-sea captain who speaks in nautical terms, a comically misspelled letter, and funny names like Dolly Cowslip, Hodge Dolt, Richard Bumpkin, and Madge Litter. Some of the self-deprecating chapter titles resemble those in *Don Quixote*, such as 3 ("Which the Reader, on Perusal, May Wish Were Chapter the Last") and 8 ("Which Is Within a Hair's Breadth of Proving Highly Interesting"). Smollett acknowledges the premise is shaky: the villain of the piece, a misanthropist named Ferret (based on novelist John Shebbeare), mocks Sir Launcelot's quest: "What (said Ferret) you set up for a modern Don Quixote?—The scheme is rather too stale and extravagant.—What was a humourous romance and well-timed satire in Spain, near two hundred years ago, will make but a sorry jest, and appear equally insipid and absurd when really acted from affectation, at this time a-day, in a country like England" (2). Smollett's solution was to portray a character acting, as Sir Launcelot claims, "not in the character of a lunatic knight-errant, but as a plain English gentleman, jealous of his honour, and resolute in his purpose" (19). With Sir Launcelot as his champion, Smollett tilts against the disgraces of his time: the electoral process, the justice system, legal and medical practices, the prison system, and other social outrages, implying that it's England that is mad,

not Sir Launcelot. “I think for my part one half of the nation is mad,” a minor character says, “and the other not very sound” (6). Sir Launcelot rejects the ridiculous aspects of knight-errantry that Don Quixote embraced, but insists “chivalry was a useful institution while confined to its original purposes of protecting the innocent, assisting the friendless, and bringing the guilty to condign punishment” (18), all of which he accomplishes. Smollett’s knight-errant is not a crazed idealist but a good British citizen; everyone should be as “mad” as he is.

The idea of Don Quixote as the pattern for an English gentleman takes on a Christian hue in *The Fool of Quality* (1765–70), a five-volume pedagogical romance by the Irish dramatist and poet Henry Brooke (1703–83). The most distinctive feature of the first half of the novel is the dialogue between the author and the reader (unctuously called “Friend”) at the end of each chapter, where they evaluate the progress of the novel and discuss issues raised in it.[276] In the dialogue at the end of chapter 4, the author claims the greatest modern hero is not a king or military leader but a “madman” to be found “In a fragment of the Spanish history bequeathed to the world by one Signior Cervantes.” Quixote is his hero because he devoted himself to “the righting of wrongs, and redressing of injuries, lifting up the fallen, and pulling down those whom iniquity had exalted.” He admits the knight’s madness caused some difficulties, but his heart was in the right place: “If events did not answer to the enterprises of his heart, it is not to be imputed to the man but to his malady” (1:152–54). Ignoring (like most readers) the fact that Don Quixote did more harm than good to people, the author later praises him as “the finest gentleman we read of in romance” for two specific qualities: his “charity to the poor” and his “delicacy of behavior toward” women (2:196–98)—Don Quixote as a gentlemanly philanthropist.

The foolish knight of Brooke’s novel is Henry Clinton, second son of an earl, who is neglected by his father and educated instead by his rich uncle, who kidnaps him and raises him to practice selfless Christian benevolence. As the goody-goody boy grows up, he is compared a few more times to “a knight in romance,” and for his unconventional, idealistic behavior he, like Don Quixote, is labeled by conventional people “a fool.” (Someone actually pins that on his back at a royal reception.) But his uncle and author make it

clear that Clinton takes his cues not from romance novels but from the New Testament, and as the novel progresses it turns into religiose mush, heavy on sentimental tales of ruin and redemption, and aimed at the kind of reader who listens to the elder Clinton's sob story: "I love to weep! I joy to grieve! It is my happiness, my delight, to have my heart broken in pieces" (3:49). Readers today are more likely to react to the novel as Mr. Meekly does in the final volume: "Let me go, let me go from this place, my lord, cried Meekly! this boy will absolutely kill me if I stay any longer. He overpowers, he suffocates me with the weight of his sentiments" (5:22).

This is a shame, because *The Fool of Quality* gives promise at the beginning of a more Cervantic novel. The title comes from a sardonic line in Pope's *Dunciad* (1:298), and there's a reference to Swift's *Tale of a Tub* in the impudent dedication. The preface begins, "I hate prefaces. I never read them, and why should I write them?" and the author sounds like Tristram Shandy when he discusses his publication plans with the reader:

> Fr[iend]. How many volumes do you expect this work will contain?
> Aut[hor]. Sir, a book may be compared to the life of your neighbour. If it be good, it cannot last too long; if bad, you cannot get rid of it too early.
> Fr. But, how long, I say, do you propose to make your story?
> Aut. My good friend, the reader may make it as short as he pleases. (1:70)

The "Friend" later doubts whether the author "laid any kind of plan before you set about the building" (1:221). Again like Sterne, Brooke fills his novel with fables, interpolated histories, sermons, "sentimental observations and pertinent digressions" (1:247), even a lengthy formal essay on the "beauties" of the British constitution (which can be skipped, he says, "if the reader loves amusement preferable to instruction").

But the repetitious sentimental situations, wildly coincidental reunions, unexpected inheritances that lift good people out of undeserved poverty, and young Clinton's Christlike perfection overwhelm the novel's unconventional qualities. Many critics hated it but John Wesley, the founder of Methodism, loved it and issued an abridged edition in 1781, not surprisingly dropping the metafictional devices and the few other

interesting things about *The Fool of Quality*, including the title. He changed it to *The History of Henry, Earl of Moreland*, identifying him as a member of "quality" rather than as a holy fool, like Don Quixote.

John Wesley makes a brief appearance in *The Spiritual Quixote* (1773) by Richard Graves (1715–1804), but he would have hated this keen satire on Methodism, a cult that appealed to the worst sort of people, according to most novelists of the period, other than pious ones like Richardson and Brooke. (In *Tom Jones*, Blifil joins them at the end; *Pompey the Little* nips at their heels; *Captain Greenland* guys them.) Graves returns to the original concept of Quixote as a deranged enthusiast who is derided rather than respected for his idealism. In a funk, 25-year-old Geoffry Wildgoose falls under the spell not of chivalric romances but of 17th-century Puritan tracts, real books like *The Marrow of Divinity*, *The Crumbs of Comfort*, *Honey Out of the Rock*, and *Directions for Weak Distempered Christians to Grow Up to a Confirmed State of Grace*—the last two of which Graves retitles *Honeycombs for the Elect* and *The Spiritual Eye-salves and Cordials for the Saints and Shoves for Heavy-arsed Christians* (1.4). Enlisting a local cobbler named Jeremy Tugwell as his Sancho Panza, he sallies forth to preach the lessons from this "crude trash" to the British rabble, with comic results. A blow to Wildgoose's head while preaching knocks the sense back into him near the end, and after an edifying talk with an established clergyman, he ends his spiritual adventure and returns home.

Like *Don Quixote*, *The Spiritual Quixote* begins with a facetious fanfare of front matter—dedication, a "Prefatory Anecdote" by the editor explaining how he acquired the manuscript, a postscript, an advertisement, another dedication (by the putative author, Christopher Collop, "the comely Curate of Cotswold"), and an introduction—and like Cervantes, Graves includes interpolated stories, mock-heroic diction, and essayistic digressions, including an "Essay on Quixotism." Here he defines Quixotism as a "frantic notion" brought on by an "absurd imagination" that leads to error: Don Quixote "mistook windmills for giants, and a harmless flock of sheep for an army of pagans," while Wildgoose sees average British citizens in the grip of "the powers of darkness" due to ignorance of the true (Methodist) message of the Bible (2.3). That message privileged faith over works, which appealed to those who felt free to engage in riotous behavior as long as they "believed." As in *A Tale of a Tub*, dissenting religion is a

cover for sublimated sexuality: a landlord who has observed Methodists says "there is nothing but whoring and rogueing among them" (5.2), confirmed by one enthusiast named Deborah who pants, "Such *ravishing* ministers. They come *so close to the point*; and does so *grapple* with the sinner! They probe his sores to the very quick, and *pour in such comfortable balsam*!" (5.3; her emphasis). At one prayer meeting, a 13-year-old girl cries out "that she was pricked through and through by the power of the word," which Graves quotes directly from Methodist founder George Whitefield's *Journal*.

The Spiritual Quixote is a smart, cleverly written satire—it's always fun to see religious rubes roasted—but it breaks no new ground. It is set in the 1740s and was begun around 1757, and thus really belongs with the first generation of Fieldingesque novels of the '50s. Its style and manner were somewhat dated by the time it was published in 1773, but that didn't prevent it from well-deserved popularity, and it remains one of the finest English novels of the last third of the 18th century. But Graves also diluted the concept of Quixotism: Geoffry Wildgoose is a full-strength example, but in the "Essay on Quixotism" the author mentions "another species, or rather slighter degree of Quixotism, which proceeds merely from . . . a desire of imitating any great personage whom we read of in history," which is usually harmless, even admirable, as is the desire to reform abuses: a philosopher Wildgoose meets tells him "I cannot reflect with patience upon the many absurd practices and opinions which prevail in the world, and have often been tempted to turn itinerant myself and sally forth in order to reform mankind, and set them right in various particulars. [¶] When I hear of a father's marrying his daughter against her inclinations, and sacrificing her happiness to her grandeur, I am ready, like the Spanish Don, to challenge him to mortal combat, and rescue the unhappy victim from the power which he abuses" (4.11). Graves even extends Quixotism to include an animal-rights advocate.

This notion of Don Quixote as an admirable reformer began to supersede that of the deluded busybody: the statesman Edmund Burke was called a "political Quixote," which was considered an insult by some, but which he took as a compliment.[277] The complimentary sense persists in late 18th-century novels like *The Philosophical Quixote* (1782) by John Harcourt and

Samuel Dennis—an epistolary novel about a country apothecary who is a little too enthusiastic about recent discoveries in science, but is a benevolent person, not a mad scientist—and *The Amicable Quixote* (1788), an anonymous novel in which the Quixote is merely a nice guy who amicably courts and marries a nice woman. This diluted sense of the term also pervades *William Thornborough, the Benevolent Quixote* (1791) and *The History of Sir George Warrington; or, The Political Quixote* (1796–97), both by sisters Jane and Elizabeth Purbeck; in the latter, a man flirts with revolutionary ideas, especially those expressed in Thomas Paine's *Rights of Man*, then realizes such ideas are too idealistic and settles back into the comforts of a constitutional monarchy. By the end of the century, the adjective "quixotic" settled into its modern sense: someone who is quaintly idealistic rather than dangerously wrong, which is not what Cervantes meant at all.

IT NARRATIVES

Recapitulating the genre that Gildon inaugurated in *The Golden Spy* a half-century earlier were two novels that appeared in 1760: *The Adventures of a Black Coat* by Edward Philips and *Chrysal; or, The Adventures of a Guinea* by the Irish writer Charles Johnstone (1719?–1800?). In the first, a gloomy old black coat proposes to tell his story to a new white coat hung in the same closet, an impudent young sport who "laughed in his sleeve" at the proposition, but nonetheless listens as dutifully as Rasselas does to Imlac's story of his life. (Freya Johnston detects several verbal and thematic parallels between the two short novels, implying Philips meant to take the piss out of *Rasselas*.) As the black coat is passed from owner to owner, the author satirizes a cross-section of London society, including a wretched playwright—an episode that recalls Melopoyn's tale in *Roderick Random*—and a desperate Grub Street hack. It is deliberately short, "for were we inclined to enlarge this performance, the bare recital of numberless minutes, which we have and shall suppress, would extend it to volumes" (46). That's what Johnstone did with his novel: the two volumes he published in 1760 proved so popular that he published an additional two volumes in 1765, swelling the episodic novel to the size of *Tristram Shandy.*

Chrysal is derivative not only of Gildon's novel, but of Lesage's *Devil upon Crutches* and the scandal-novels of Manley and Haywood. A bedraggled alchemist conjures up the spirit of gold, who calls him/herself Chrysal (Johnstone alternates pronouns); dug up as ore in Peru, formed into a golden crucifix, and eventually transmuted to a guinea, Chrysal tattles on everyone who possessed her over the decades, or more accurately, who was possessed by money. The story ends at the moment when Chrysal is about to reveal "the summation of human knowledge" to the alchemist—who farts. "The spirit started at the unpardonable offense to his purity; and looking at me with ineffable contempt, indignation, and abhorrence, vanished from my sight, without deigning a word more" (1.2.24). The novel is essentially an anthology of stories about greed, for although the large cast of characters commit all seven deadly sins and break all 10 commandments, the ravages of greed predominate. The stories lack subtlety, the style lacks style, and Johnstone complicated matters (but not in a good way) when he added the second two volumes in 1765, for instead of continuing with further examples of avarice, he expanded upon incidents in the first two volumes, sometimes contradicting himself, and making a chronological mess of things.[278] Like Manley's *New Atalantis*, *Chrysal* was appealing because it aired the dirty laundry of thinly veiled famous people, and because of its coarse realism and pandering sensationalism. (In one episode, Jewish bankers attempt to sacrifice Christian children for Passover, and in another, members of the Hellfire Club celebrate a Black Mass with a costumed baboon in Medmenham Abbey.) Reversing *Tristram Shandy*'s character index, 90 perceent of the people in *Chrysal* are odious, and the relentless scheming and scamming grows tiresome. On the other hand, Kevin Bourque persuasively argues in his excellent introduction to the recent Valancourt edition that *Chrysal*'s mash-up of "celebrity tabloid, journalism, moral philosophy, materialist science, conduct literature, political theory and bawdy trash" results in the "one text that fully epitomizes eighteenth-century England, in all walks of life and with its contradictions, bustle, noise and humanity intact" (li)—a world depressingly like our own.

The most outlandish example of the genre is Smollett's penultimate novel, *The History and Adventures of an Atom* (1769), his shortest, densest, and

most complex novel—but also his worst. The it-narrator is a foul-mouthed atom that transmigrated through numerous Japanese politicians centuries earlier before entering a grain of rice eaten by a Dutch sailor at Nagasaki who took the atom west until it eventually lodged itself in the pineal gland of a hack author in London named Nathaniel Peacock. One day, it begins speaking to Peacock, ordering him to write down what it experienced among those Japanese politicians during a time of conflict, which is essentially a coded account of the Seven Years' War (1756–63), a ruinous territorial spat among nations that nearly bankrupted England. The *Atom* is a virulent satire on the politics of war that brought out the Swift in Smollett: scatology was his weapon of choice, and he flings verbal feces at everyone involved in that idiotic war, literalizing the ass-kissing that went on as politicians used the war as an excuse to further their own careers. Smollett was inspired by *Chrysal*, which also dealt with the same war—"about a liberty of cutting sticks upon a desert shore," the golden narrator scoffs (1.1.10)—and though he didn't much care for *Tristram Shandy*, Smollett liked the genre it belonged to: channeling Rabelais and Swift, he used the *Atom* as an excuse to indulge in scatological humor and pedantic digressions on various topics (trousers, alchemy, sorcery, surnames, music, kicking and beating, etc.), as well as to show off his wide vocabulary. But the results are leaden rather than golden: the digressions are undermotivated, the cod-Japanese names are silly and often literally shitty (Nin-kom-poo-po, Fika-Kaka), and the story difficult to follow without recourse to the copious annotations that Robert Adams Day supplies in his definitive edition. (He appends 1,251 annotations to the 132-page novel.) The *Atom* is a fierce antiwar satire, a cartoonishly violent yet historically accurate account of the Seven Years' War, but it lacks the comedic spirit that animates the literary tradition Smollett emulates. He thought he had united "the happy extravagance of Rabelais to the splendid humor of Swift"—as he wrote of the anonymously published novel in his own journal, the *Critical Review*—but its extravagance and humor are strained. (Arbuthnot did something similar in *John Bull*, with much happier results.) The quirkiest of the it-narratives, it might be better to split the *Atom* between a political allegory (à la *Gulliver's Travels*) and an interior monologue by a hack writer (à la *A Tale of a Tub*) driven crazy by his country's insane political system.

The it-narrative's popularity and easy-to-follow formula (satirize society from the POV of a mobile object) inspired other novelists to write similar works, such as Thomas Bridges's *Adventures of a Banknote* (1771), the anonymous *Birmingham Counterfeit* (1772), *Adventures of a Corkscrew* (1775), and *History of a French Louse* (1779), Dorothy Kilner's *Adventures of a Hackney Coach* (1781), and Helenus Scott's *Adventures of a Rupee* (1782), among many others. An anonymous reviewer of the last-named dismissed the entire genre: "This mode of making up a book, and styling it the Adventures of a Cat, a Dog, a Monkey, a Hackney-Coach, a Louse, a Shilling, a Rupee, or—anything else, is grown so fashionable, that few months pass which do not bring one of them under our inspection. It is indeed a convenient method to writers of the inferior class, of emptying their commonplace books, and throwing together all the farrago of public transactions, private characters, old and new stories, every thing, in short, which they can pick up, to afford a little temporary amusement to an idle reader."[279] But there were enough idle readers to keep the genre alive for another 50 years.

MODERN ROMANCES

No genre shows "a more deliberate and studied recapitulation of the same ground" as the romance novel, whose authors ring endless variations on the same story—chaperoning a young beauty across the minefield separating menarche from matrimony—with the same stock characters (strong-willed parents or guardians, loose-moraled men and/or unwanted suitors, with Mr. Right waiting in the wings), and harping upon the same half-dozen notes (reputation, virtue, delicacy, honor, prudence, decorum). During the last half of the 18th century, these novels became less sensational and more realistic, less humorless and more socially aware, less about courtship and more about marriage, but they show little innovation in form or language, so I'm going to speed-date those recommended by more sympathetic critics of the genre.

Charlotte Lennox followed her delightful *Female Quixote* with one entitled *Henrietta* (1758) that initially promises likewise to follow in Fielding's footsteps. Looking over a boardinghouse library, Henrietta

Courteney rejects Manley's *Atalantis* and Haywood's "love-sick, passionate stories" in favor of *Joseph Andrews*, which she has already read three times with "much eagerness and delight" (1.6), and further distances herself from the older romance tradition by mocking a flighty new friend who insists on calling each other by the romantic names Clelia and Celinda. But the novel recapitulates the old story of an independent young woman who flees to London to escape a forced marriage and conversion to Catholicism, and who experiences the usual troubles there with men because she possesses "a form which it was not possible to behold without sensibility" (2.8). She keeps her wits about her and eventually finds true love, making some sharp observations about society along the way. A smart novel about a smart woman, *Henrietta* sets the tone for later novels by Frances Burney and Jane Austen.

Sarah Fielding, having struck "a little out of a road already much beaten" with *The Cry* and *The Lives of Cleopatra and Octavia* (1757), returned within sight of the beaten road for her final two novels, *The Countess of Dellwyn* (1759) and *The History of Ophelia* (1760), both dramatizing a sheltered girl's entrance into the social world. The first concerns 17-year-old Charlotte Lucum, who is pressured by her ambitious father to marry a 63-year-old, wheelchair-bound aristocrat, the idea of which disgusts her until she travels to London for the first time and glimpses the dazzling life she'll lead as a diamond-draped countess. In a brilliant move, Fielding opens the novel with the ludicrous wedding ceremony, Charlotte maintaining "an unalterable steadiness, rather inclined to the gay" as her infirm groom fails three times to slide the wedding ring on her finger. Predictably, their married life is a farce, and when she fails to produce an heir for Lord Dellwyn, he divorces her—an extremely rare event in novels of the time. By contrast, Fielding provides several examples of more sensible wives, with fewer financial advantages than Charlotte, who by way of virtue and hard work make a success of their marriages. The novel, like most romance novels, ends with wedding bells, but they ring for minor characters, not for the former Countess of Dellwyn, publicly disgraced and scraping by as a gambler. The multiple story-lines, nonlinear structure, and alternating tonal registers (from sardonic to didactic) differentiate *The Countess of Dellwyn* from other romance novels of the day.

Ophelia, another twist on the standard romance formula, is interesting partly for its effective use of what Shklovsky calls enstrangement, and partly as a response to *Pamela* and *Clarissa*. Taking the form of a long letter written by the title character in middle age, Ophelia Dorchester (née Lenox) describes her upbringing in wild Wales until age 16, when she is kidnapped by a visiting English lord who had stumbled across the orphan and her aunt a few months earlier. (She is kidnapped in error a little later, and kidnapped a third time in the middle of the novel, which surely must be a dig at Richardson's overuse of that plot device. On the third occasion, Ophelia escapes from the countryhouse at which she is detained with the help of a smitten clergyman, as in *Pamela.*) Unlike the rakes in Richardson's novels, Dorchester has no immediate sexual designs on her, though he often displays a lover's jealousy during their first year together, and unlike Richardson's heroines, Ophelia warms to her abductor rather quickly, though she too insists they are only friends. It's a curious whitewashing of Richardson's first two novels, draining them of their sexual tension and obsession with virtue.[280] Ophelia Lenox has more in common with Charlotte Lennox's female Quixote, for Fielding takes advantage of her heroine's isolated upbringing to stage some comic responses—the first time Ophelia sees a carriage, she calls it "a small hut, as I thought, with two horses fastened to it," and is as scared as a cat when it starts to move (chap. 5)—and to contrast natural with civilized behavior: when Dorchester takes her to visit Bedlam after a season in London, Ophelia is "surprised to find so few people confined in a place which I was told had been appropriated to the reception of such as were deprived of their *reason*, for I myself had seen a sufficient number to have filled it whom I should have judged well qualified" (39). Like Lennox's Henrietta, Ophelia disapproves of female intellectuals, and fair *Ophelia* had an even more demonstrable influence than *Henrietta* on Burney and Austen.[281]

Ophelia was popular, but nowhere near as popular as a novel by another of Samuel Richardson's female protégées, *The Memoirs of Miss Sidney Bidulph* (1761) by Irish dramatist Frances Sheridan (1724–66), mother of the more famous playwright Richard Brinsley Sheridan. An epistolary novel dedicated to Richardson, it too drains his novels of their sexual tension but is just as obsessed with the Christian idea of virtue. It concerns a priggish

young doormat who admits to her correspondent (a childhood friend living in Europe) that "I have no will of my own. I never knew what it was to have one, and never shall . . ." and allows all her actions "to be determined by those to whom I owe obedience."[282] She submits first to the will of her domineering mother, who forbids Sidney from marrying her first love, and then to the will of her churlish, adulterous husband (who, to the reader's relief, dies young), and throughout to the perceived will of her god. It is soap opera about a self-sacrificing woman who follows all the rules of the time (the novel is set between 1703 and 1708) and yet suffers as a result, which could be interpreted as a critique of those rules, especially since those who flaunt the rules—like her evil angel Miss Burchell, "a female libertine," "a sly rake in petticoats" (392, 396)—certainly get more out of life than this stay-at-home prude. Like Pamela and Clarissa, Sidney is a moral absolutist among moral relativists, who question her "chimerical notions of honour," her "delicacy of sentiments," her overly "nice and punctilious" virtue, her "ridiculous nicety." If Sheridan wanted to expose the impractical ludicrousness of such notions, she succeeded brilliantly. It goes without saying that Sidney is extremely religious, confident that her unexamined devotion to 17th-century Protestant theology will be rewarded in a mythical "afterlife," but before that a sunburned deus ex machina appears in the person of Ned Warner, a previously unmentioned cousin who made a fortune in Jamaica and returns to England at the end to rescue Sidney and her children from ruin.

The novel was popular enough that Sheridan wrote a *Conclusion of the Memoirs of Miss Sidney Bidulph* (published posthumously in 1767). Reluctant to become the kind of domineering mother that ruined her life, Sidney passively allows her grown daughters to endure "abductions, lies, near rapes, madness," though eventually "the evil male figures are cast out and rendered powerless without Sidney *doing anything*," as Sheridan's latest editors note in exasperation. Like Clarissa, "She dies in a kind of glorified inert state—the passive angel longing for the hereafter."[283] I'd like to think that Sheridan was mocking passive, Christian conformists like Miss Sidney Bidulph, but I suspect she hoped her readers would admire and even emulate this naïve, self-sacrificing martyr to prudence. That might

have been possible in the 18th century, but not today, which renders Sheridan's novels dated relics rather than living works of literature.

A livelier number named Frances Brooke (1724–89) also shows Richardson's influence in her first novel, *The History of Lady Julia Mandeville* (1763), though it shows the greater influence of Marie Jeanne Riccoboni's *Letters from Juliet, Lady Catesby*, which Brooke translated (and which I discussed in chapter 2). Brooke is best known for her second novel, *The History of Emily Montague* (1769), which I'll discuss in the next chapter because it was written/set in Canada, and for her delightful third novel, *The Excursion* (1777), which I'll discuss right here. This is not a long Richardsonian epistolary novel but a short, Fieldingesque comedy that, in fact, pointedly repudiates the former mode: after young Maria Villiers, "a miss educated in shades," convinces her uncle/guardian to let her visit London (for husband-hunting, though she doesn't tell him that), "He cautioned her, not against the giants of modern novel, who carry off young ladies by force in post-chaises and six with the blinds up, and confine free-born English women in their country houses, under the guardianship of monsters in the shape of fat housekeepers, from which durance they are happily released by the compassion of Robert the butler; but against worthless acquaintance, unmerited calumny, and ruinous expence" (1.7). Brooke quotes from *Tom Jones* a little later and obviously sails under Fielding's flag. As soon as Maria hits town, she falls in with worthless acquaintances—card-playing, scandal-mongering socialites whom Brooke mocks relentlessly—and racks up "unmerited calumny, and ruinous expence" in her pursuit of a foppish lord. Rescued from social and financial ruin by an old family friend, Maria finds a more suitable husband back in the home counties. *The Excursion* reads more like a chick-lit novel of the 1990s than an amatory romance of the 18th-century, partly due to its modern title (not *The History of* . . . or *Memoirs of* . . . or even plain *Maria Villiers*), and partly due to its unusual surface: the text is broken into hundreds of short paragraphs, many only a sentence long, and gathered into short, purse-size chapters. Thoroughly modern Maria also tries to launch a career: while in London she hopes to find publisher for a novel, an epic poem, and a tragic play: only the latter is submitted for consideration—to the great actor/manager David Garrick, who comes off poorly here—and she's already thinking ahead to her next novel (which may be the one we're

reading). Like Maria herself, *The Excursion* has "fine sense and sprightliness, mixed with a very interesting style of sentiment" (2.1), which is to say, worldly without indecency (it's a very chaste novel) and intellectually sophisticated without repudiating traditional values. (Several times Brooke excoriates amoral, irreligious writers of the time like Lord Chesterfield and Voltaire.) *The Excursion* is one of the few novels of the period that tills new ground by adding French savoir faire to the English romance genre.

Georgiana Spencer, later Duchess of Devonshire (1757–1806), made her fiction debut at 16 with what her modern editor calls a "sentimental and somewhat contrived" epistolary novel entitled *Emma; or, The Unfortunate Attachment* (1773), but she is better known for another epistolary novel, more sordid and artful, called *The Sylph* (1779), also about an unfortunate attachment.[284] Like Sarah Fielding's Ophelia, 17-year-old Julia Grenville was raised in the wilds of Wales by her father (who, like the father in *The Female Quixote*, has retired in disgust from the world) and is spotted by a traveling Londoner, a rake who marries her only because he can't seduce her, takes her back to London, then resumes his libertine lifestyle, leaving Julia to write home to her sister about the shocking morals of the upper classes. About halfway through the novel, Julia begins receiving notes from a man who calls himself her Sylph—the description of sylphs from Pope's "Rape of the Lock" serves as the novel's epigraph—offering advice on how to deal with all the rakes, cheating wives, and scandal-mongers. Julia's spendthrift husband incurs so many gambling debts that he's willing to sell his wife to a fellow rake named Biddulph, then commits suicide. Julia returns to Wales, and is soon visited by her sylph, who turns out to be a childhood admirer who had been keeping an eye on her in London, and they marry: yet another novel suggesting that a woman's *second* marriage is the one that counts, a departure from earlier romantic fiction. In the final letter, one of Julia's correspondents writes her as if writing to the author: "Upon my word, a pretty kind of a romantic adventure you have made of it, and the conclusion of the business just as it should be, and quite in the line of *poetical justice*. Virtue triumphant, and Vice dragged at her chariot wheels" (196). *The Sylph* is rather derivative: in addition to Fielding's *Ophelia* and Lennox's *Female Quixote*, there are traces of Haywood's sensational

romances (an interpolated story includes a crossdressing female, which we haven't seen in a while) and of Richardson's epistolary novels: one character criticizes *Pamela* as "pernicious" (122) and a Lovelace-wannabe taunts Julia with rape. But it's not bad for a 22-year-old, and offers an eye-opening view of London high-life by a true insider.

Yet another Frances became the most famous romance novelist of this period. After writing and destroying a novel at age 15, 25-year-old Frances Burney (1752–1840) published her wildly popular novel *Evelina; or, The History of a Young Lady's Entrance into the World* (1778). Like others on that theme, it dramatizes the clash in class and manners when a timid virgin from the provinces visits intimidating London for the first time, but Burney inverts the formula in several interesting ways. First, she draws upon a wider range of influences: in her preface, she names Rousseau, Johnson, Marivaux, Fielding, Richardson, and Smollett as exemplary novelists, and though it's not surprising that she takes her epistolary form from Richardson and plot elements from *Marianne*, it is surprising to see an uproarious Smollettic sea captain here, pulling the kind of rowdy pranks rarely seen in women's fiction. Fielding's comic spirit hovers over this frequently hilarious novel as Burney puts her provincial protagonist into as many ludicrous, embarrassing situations as Joseph Andrews or Tom Jones. Burney also departs from the norm of women's romance by portraying courtship and marriage not as an emotionally exciting roller-coaster ride that ends joyously, but as an emotionally humiliating and sometimes violent ordeal for women. Evelina is lucky enough to meet and eventually marry an ideal, Sir Charles Grandison-type named Lord Orville—she must be a real hottie, for she has zero personality—but she is harassed throughout by fops and rakes, browbeaten by a ridiculous grandmother, satirized by an older female companion, and imposed upon by her brazenly bourgeois relatives. The novel opens with the story of how her mother was forced into a marriage, abandoned by her husband, and died in childbirth—warning us of the dangers Evelina faces—nor is there a single happily married couple in the book. The first line of the novel asks, "Can anything, my good Sir, be more painful to a friendly mind than a necessity of communicating disagreeable intelligence?" and the disagreeable intelligence *Evelina* communicates is how badly it sucked to be a woman in 18th-century England. Even though Evelina is flattered at Lord Orville's attention, she is

forced to marry him much sooner than she would have wished, compromising the traditional happy ending. On her wedding day, she plans to return home to Berry Hill and the true love of her life, the elderly clergyman who reared her after her mother's death, and Burney saves her last twist on the romance formula for the novel's final line: "the chaise now awaits which is to conduct me to dear Berry Hill, and to the arms of the best of men," Evelina writes the old gent, leaving it ambiguous whether she means him or her new husband. Earlier, she had twice pictured Lord Orville as an old man, "when *time had wintered o'er his locks*," when he would "resemble him whom I love and honour."[285] Evelina hasn't progressed at all: having entered the world, she doesn't like what she sees and returns home seven months later, as naïve as she left, except with a new guardian. "I hardly know myself to whom I most belong," she says near the end (3.15), and the tragedy of this romantic comedy is that Evelina never belongs to herself.

Like Sheridan and other novelists following in Richardson's footsteps, Burney realized how unrealistic his epistolary mode is—at one point she self-consciously has her protagonist offer the lame excuse that even though a character related her account of a visit "in a hasty manner, yet I believe I can recollect every word" (3.16)—and consequently abandoned it for third-person narrative for her two other major novels, *Cecilia* (1782) and *Camilla* (1796). The former concerns a 21-year-old heiress who will inherit a fortune only if she marries a man willing to take her surname, the patriarchal legacy of Cecilia Beverley's uncle, who dies at the beginning of the 900-page novel. Until she reaches her majority, she is under the control of her guardians, three ludicrous examples of pride and prejudice:[286] the socially self-conscious spendthrift Mr. Harrel; the vulgar, tightfisted Mr. Briggs; and the haughty aristocrat Mr. Delvile, whose son Mortimer falls in love with Cecilia and who, after hundreds of pages of complications and misunderstandings, eventually marries her.[287] But the novel departs from the romance genre in several key ways: above average in intelligence and benevolence, Cecilia is more concerned with finding a vocation than a husband, and settles on charity work, with the encouragement of a strange character named Albany, who speaks like an Old Testament prophet. Cecilia is surrounded by upper-class socialites who fritter away their lives and

middle-class merchants obsessed with making money, the butts of Burney's satire. Aside from Cecilia and Albany, only a young man named Delfield attempts to find a sensible alternative to upper-class frivolity and middle-class money-grubbing, and fails in the attempt; appropriately enough, at a masquerade early in the novel where we meet many of the novel's characters, he dresses up as Don Quixote.

The novel is set in 1779 and 1780, while the American Revolution was underway; and though there are no direct references to that conflict, the novel is filled with talk of independence. Delfield, who defines happiness as "labour with independence" (8.5), argues that "customs long established, and habits long indulged, assume an empire despotic" (9.3), and the novel's characters can be divided into those who revolt against that empire, and those who support it (namely, the males who benefit from the patriarchal privileges of those long-established customs and habits) or buckle under to it (virtually all the women in the novel). Burney's mercantile characters, the liveliest and funniest people in the novel, openly mock the pretensions and supposed superiority of aristocrats, Albany thunders against anyone who wastes money that could go to the poor, and Delvile rages against the patriarchal pressure (partly self-imposed) that prevents him from abandoning custom and taking Cecilia's surname. As he tells his mother, "In the general commerce of the world it may be right to yield to its prejudices, but in matters of serious importance, it is weakness to be shackled by scruples so frivolous, and it is cowardly to be governed by the customs we condemn. Religion and laws of our country should then alone be consulted, and where those are neither opposed nor infringed, we should hold ourselves superior to all other considerations" (8.6). "Cowardice" and "defiance" are words that surface frequently as characters decide whether they are strong enough to follow the pursuit of happiness "in defiance of the censure of mankind," as Mrs. Delvile puts it a few lines later. She insists the most "odious" attitude a young woman can take is "a daring defiance of the world and its opinions" (6.8), which Burney implies is actually a heroic attitude. Cecilia calls her young friend Henrietta "a heroick girl" when she learns of her willingness to defy custom (10.4), and blushes to realize she lacks that ability. It takes courage to be independent, but Cecilia is too afraid of the censure of mankind to pursue her own happiness, too obsessed with what the narrator minimizes as "merely . . . punctilious honour and

delicacy" (4.7). Her family doctor, the one who coined "pride and prejudice," encourages her to think outside the box: "Let [the Delviles] keep their prejudices, which, though different, are not worse than their neighbours, and do you retain your excellencies, and draw from them the happiness which they ought to give you. People reason and refine themselves into a thousand miseries by choosing to settle that they can only be contented one way; whereas, there are fifty ways, if they would but look about them, that would commonly do as well" (8.8). A slave to the patriarchal ideology under which she was raised, wearing Blake's "mind-forg'd manacles," Cecilia goes temporarily insane near the end, and although she recovers, marries her man (though consummation is postponed indefinitely), and eventually replaces the fortune she lost to her spendthrift guardian, Cecilia remains troubled on the final page, convinced that the proud, aristocratic family she has married into will soon "murmur" at her earlier actions. Realizing even happy people have "some misery" to deal with, she decides to bear her "partial evil with cheerfullest resignation" (10.10), a muted conclusion that represents Burney's own revolt against the custom of ending romance novels happily, in defiance of her male advisors. She puts things into perspective: "Compared with the general lot of human misery, Cecilia has suffered nothing" (7.7).

Cecilia was written quickly under patriarchal pressure (from her father, mentor, and publisher) and consequently is marred by too great a reliance on stock melodrama and extraordinary coincidences. Yet it anticipates the Victorian novel in its breadth and social concerns, in its variety of characters high and low and their distinctive diction—the narrator has a penchant for euphuism—and for its dramatization of how great expectations go awry at the vanity fair that is the conventional world.

Fourteen years later, Burney published *Camilla* (1796), another 900-page novel that, like *Evelina*, centers on the romantic problems of a naïve 17-year-old (and those of her friends), but even its sympathetic modern editors admit it was written to popular tastes: Burney "declined innovation," ignored her earlier "aesthetic rule" against unrealistically happy endings, and, "torn between the demands of artistic integrity and those of profitable bookmaking," settled for the latter (xiv–xviii). The reviews were mixed, and Burney "had to admit—if only to herself—that the book was sometimes mawkish, its melodramatic passages too many, and its moral dicta

prolonged beyond narrative limits. In fact, she was forced to the humiliating confession that its language was often imprecise and ungrammatical" (xvi). Jane Austen liked it, but in her *Northanger Abbey* she allows a dolt to dismiss it as "the horridest nonsense you can imagine; there is nothing in the world in it but an old man's playing at see-saw and learning Latin" (chap. 7). There's obviously more to *Camilla* than that, as recent critics have argued, but the speed-dating bell is jingling and we need to move on.

Meet Miss Milner, an 18-year-old flirt who falls for a 30-year-old priest. (This should be interesting.) *A Simple Story* (1791) by actress/dramatist Elizabeth Inchbald (1753–1821) is the not-so-simple story of the abuse of power. Dorriforth, an ordained but nonpracticing priest, becomes the legal guardian of a rich party girl who stays out all night, plays guitar, wears revealing clothes, and reads racy novels.[288] Though disapproving, Dorriforth exerts almost no power over her, and after they both realize they're in love with each other—and after he inherits an estate and renounces his vows—she begins abusing what she considers the rightful power a woman has over her fiancé. She goes too far and almost loses him, but just as he's leaving they are married during one of the most surprising nuptial scenes in fiction. The second half of the novel takes places 17 years later: after four years of blissful marriage, things fall apart—he goes off on a three-year business trip to the West Indies, she resumes flirting with an old flame—and after she dies at the age of 35, Dorriforth (now Lord Elmwood) does a 180 and becomes a tyrannical abuser of power, banning his daughter from his sight in revenge against his unfaithful wife, and exacting dictatorial obedience from everyone around him. It takes a Richardsonian abduction before he realizes he has been as stern with her as he was lax with her mother. Fortunately, his daughter has been as subservient as her mother was disobedient, and the novel ends implying that people in a position of power should wield it wisely, and those who aren't should respect and obey those who are. It's psychologically interesting that Elmwood reunites with his daughter—the image of her mother—when she's the same age he fell for Miss Milner: she's the obedient, well-behaved lady he wanted his wife to be. But instead of pursuing *that* tricky situation, Inchbald marries her off to Elmwood's nephew.

Carefully matching form with content, the style of the first half is sprightly, witty, and sometimes lapses into present tense, as in stage directions for a play. Miss Milner (we're never told her first name) is the sassiest character since Charlotte in *Sir Charles Grandison*, and as a Protestant she sometimes pokes fun at the Catholicism of her guardian and his mentor, a sour Jesuit named Sandford.[289] The second half is dour and more conventional, with traces of the Gothic and sentimental modes popular at that time. Throughout, Inchbald—like Sterne—pays close attention to gestures, especially at table, and restricts herself to a small cast and a small number of rooms, which, along with the lively dialogue, gives her novel a stagelike quality. The reactionary message is disappointing—better to be an obedient doormat than an independent woman (like Inchbald herself)—and is probably the result of the author's determination to do anything to get this novel published: "if she had to change it—if she had to extend it—if she had to construct it in a different way—if she had to add tag lines to associate it with popular views and interests," she would and did (Jenkins, 276). Nevertheless, *A Simple Story* is one of the quirkiest romance novels of the period, and had it ended after the first half, would be one of the best.

Probably *the* quirkiest romance novel of the period is *Walsingham* (1797), the fifth of seven novels published in the final eight years of her life by Mary Robinson (1758–1800), who, like Inchbald, turned to writing fiction after a career in the theater. The Broadview edition gives away the plot on the back cover: "The novel follows the story of two main characters, Walsingham Ainsforth and his cousin, Sir Sidney Aubrey, a girl who is passed off as a son by her mother so that she will become the family heir. Sidney, educated in France, returns to England as an adult and persistently sabotages Walsingham's love interests (having secretly fallen in love with him herself). Eventually Sidney reveals her identity, and she and Walsingham declare their mutual love, wed, and share the family's estate." Though that sounds like a recipe for a madcap, gender-confusing comedy, Robinson plays it as heavy melodrama. The victim of machinations by Mrs. Aubrey and her evil companion Judith Blagden from his birth onward, Walsingham leads a miserable life up to age 21 that involves frequent arrests, rape, murder, and thoughts of suicide. He is in love with his cousin

Isabella, who loves him too but distances herself from him when she learns the secret of Sidney's gender, winding up instead with a silly aristocrat who talks like an 18th-century Bertie Wooster. Walsingham despises Sidney for continuously ruining his life and challenges him/her to a duel at one point, yet we are to believe that after the revelation at the end, Walsingham easily forgets Isabella and eagerly marries the crossdressing bane of his life. A cynic would say Sidney has simply been softening him up for married life.

In one sense, Walsingham, like Sidney, is a gender inversion of a romance character: raised in wild Wales, he travels to London and experiences the same culture shock as the Welsh heroines of Fielding's *Ophelia* and Devonshire's *Sylph*. The novel also flips the courtship script as Sidney pursues Walsingham by various means (and breaks a few female hearts along the way). Walsingham is also aligned with the nature-loving suicidal hero of Goethe's *Werther*, yet is a hard person to like, especially after he drunkenly rapes a woman he mistakes for Isabella, and then blames her for collusion and dismisses her as an unworthy wife because of her "frailty." He's not meant to be likable: at one metafictional moment, a duchess says that, were she to write a novel, her protagonist would "be a solemn pedant without an atom of knowledge, and a man of the world wholly educated in obscurity," and then looks at Walsingham and exclaims, "My *hero*! methinks I see my *hero*!" (chap. 64). He often comes across as a Smollett antihero, lurching from one mishap to another, often the result of his own impetuosity and susceptibility to deceptive appearances. (And like Smollett, Robinson is good at various dialects.) Sidney, by contrast, is assured, genial, and charmingly cocky, though at one point her secret causes her to contemplate suicide, as though she were a closeted homosexual. It's never adequately explained what she sees in him; then again, we get only his side of the story.

The novel takes the form of a 500-page letter Walsingham writes (in a month!) to a new female friend, in between learning of Sidney's gender and marrying her; like "Sir" Sidney, Mary Robinson impersonates a man throughout, convincingly portraying a Cambridge-educated Romantic and implying that gender is a culturally constructed performance, not a biological imperative. (Less convincingly, she inserts over two dozen poems Walsingham writes between mishaps, poems that Robinson wrote earlier for other occasions.) Nonetheless, *Walsingham* is rather derivative:

the gender-switch-for-inheritance ploy was used in a 1771 novel called *The Disguise* that I'll discuss below, and Julie Shaffer indicates a number of other borrowings from contemporary novels in her notes to the Broadview edition. Plus, Robinson relies *way* too often on incredible coincidences, the lazy novelist's crutch. The bleak worldview and relentless mockery of the upper classes (and book reviewers) sours the novel, but on the other hand, *Walsingham* exhibits the willingness of some female novelists to expand the romance genre to include social criticism and philosophical observations, even if it meant that the traditional wedding bells at the end sound more like a death knell.

BLUESTOCKING NOVELS

While the majority of female English novelists fed the reading public's bottomless appetite for love stories, a minority wrote novels that explored cultural and social issues, especially those relating to women's education and rights. Around 1750, Elizabeth Montagu formed the Bluestocking Society to discuss such issues, their name taken from the informal, blue worsted stockings they wore in contrast to the formal, black silk stockings worn in high society. Sarah Fielding was a member, and *The Cry* could be considered the first bluestocking novel, though that distinction usually goes to *A Description of Millenium Hall* (*sic*, 1762) by Montagu's sister, Sarah Scott (1721?–95). She had published two earlier novels, a conventional romance entitled *The History of Cornelia* (1750) and a frame-tale narrative called *A Journey through Every Stage of Life* (1754), consisting of eight stories about "protagonists of saintly virtue and christian fortitude amounting to heroism."[290] *Millenium Hall* is a hybrid of that genre and utopian fiction: an older, unnamed male narrator and a 25-year-old "coxcomb" named Lamont stumble upon "a female Arcadia" in Cornwall, founded and maintained by two childhood friends who experienced disappointments as young ladies—one raised as a mistress, the other forced into a loveless marriage—and who, after inheriting fortunes, fled to Cornwall to establish a Christian community for other oppressed women and the deserving poor in the neighborhood. The narrator meets a cousin who relates the backstories of the two founders and three other early

members (based on members of the Bluestocking Society; Montagu appears as Lady Brumpton); these didactic, conduct-book narratives occupy two-thirds of the novel, the rest devoted to a description of the activities of this charitable community, with obsessive attention to neatness, cleanliness, and Christian principles. Young Lamont, instead of playing the wolf in this henhouse of unprotected females, is quickly converted to their religious views and is last seen reading the New Testament. *Millenium Hall* has its heart in the right place—its inhabitants have understandably abandoned "an indissoluble society" where "dissipation and extravagance are now become such universal vices" (164) and admirably devote themselves to charity work and nonprofit industry—but it's all too didactic, too goody-goody, and too religiose. (Any woman who doesn't recognize the role religion plays in her oppression is sleeping with the enemy.) It's as though Scott didn't want to shock her readers with anything too radical, and bent over backward to make her orderly, passionless community sound more like "a community of saints," as the narrator calls it (171), than a separatist feminist collective. The writing is as bland as the content, and consequently *Millenium Hall* disappoints both as fiction and as polemic.

Four years later, Scott published a sequel entitled *The History of Sir George Ellison* (1766), the name of the older visitor in the previous novel. Impressed by what he saw, this self-made millionaire buys a home in Dorsetshire and begins practicing charity in the same philanthropic spirit, and the novel is essentially an admiring account of all the good he does over the years. There's little drama; he loses out on the woman he'd like to marry because she's previously engaged—and he's so good he gives her $200K for a dowry—but when her husband later dies, Ellison marries her, and thus overcomes even this minor setback. Scott apologizes in the preface if Ellison "is too good to have existed anywhere but in imagination," but her goal was to provide a model for millionaires, not a realistic character. *Sir George Ellison* is noteworthy for being one of the first British novels to address the evils of slavery—Ellison reluctantly owned slaves in Jamaica, but he educated them and treated them more like employees—and perhaps for supplying Jane Austen with a book title.[291] But, as with *Millenium Hall*, the didactic, schoolmarmish tone is tiresome. To be sure, Scott viewed fiction as a vehicle for social reform, not one for artistic expression, and

consequently she shouldn't be faulted for an absence of the latter. Both novels were popular and reprinted.

A more artistically satisfying example of socially engaged fiction is *The Triumph of Prudence over Passion* (1781)—a scrotumtightening title if ever there were one—recently attributed to Elizabeth Sheridan (1758–1837), daughter of the author of *Sidney Bidulph*.[292] This short, epistolary novel is set largely in Ireland in 1779 and 1780, when the Irish Parliament contested the English government's unfair trade policies and asserted its authority to make its own laws. These issues are discussed by the novel's two principal correspondents, 23-year-old Louisa Mortimer and her teenage friend Eliza Fitzgerald, in between the "little novels" of Eliza's love life and those of their mutual friends. (The "little novel" trope is made often; this is a playfully self-conscious fiction.) "How some of the wise heads would laugh at a girl pretending to give an opinion in politics," the Dubliner Louisa writes Eliza (out in the country tending an ailing mother); "it is not, I believe, a very usual subject for young ladies to correspond on, but I know you have been taught to think the welfare of our country is of as much consequence to women as men" (18). Eliza agrees: "I know most men disapprove of women pretending to any opinion on these subjects, but the men of your family and mine were above that vulgar prejudice, and took some pains to make us capable of judging with some degree of precision; and I think we are obliged to them for it, since it enables us to converse sometimes on matters of importance, and not be always confined to trifles; a little of each is agreeable" (19). As the author entertainingly alternates between "matters of importance" and "trifles," she politicizes the personal; it is an *English* woman who tries to steal Eliza's Irish fiancé, and Louisa compares the "selfish, illiberal" English to an insincere rake: "a little time will show what dependence we can have on their affection, that is, provided we give them an opportunity; for no doubt they will dissemble till they are sure of carrying their point" (18). Louisa, a self-described "enthusiast in the cause of liberty and my country" (1), doesn't allow anyone to seduce her out of her independence; as offended by the word "obey" in the marriage ceremony as the Irish were by tyrannical English policies, she defiantly remains single at the end, despite a standing offer from a daycent Munster man. Like her country, she wants to be independent, and as a prudent (but

not priggish) woman, she triumphs over the passions—lust, jealousy, fear, anger—that bedevil the lives of her friends. Though the word "Bluestocking" doesn't appear in this smart, assured novel, Louisa Mortimer is precisely the kind of new woman they would have welcomed to their gatherings.

Both Scott and Sheridan avoid making their heroines *too* radical, as though agreeing with Burney's Mrs. Delvile that the most "odious" attitude a woman can have is "a daring defiance of the world and its opinions." Not so Mary Wollstonecraft (1759–97), whose startlingly original novella *Mary: A Fiction* (1788) is daringly defiant, beginning with its subtitle. She called it "a fiction" to distinguish it from mainstream romance novels, "those most delightful substitutes for bodily dissipation," as her fiercely intellectual protagonist calls them.[293] In her preface, Wollstonecraft announces that she "attempts to develop a character different from those generally portrayed" in the novels of Richardson and Rousseau; her autobiographical Mary is closer to Goethe's Werther: melancholic, bookish, romantically sensitive to the natural world, contemptuous of conventional society, and utterly unlike any previous female protagonist in English fiction. Although she doesn't commit suicide at the end like her German counterpart, she's miserable throughout the novel, beginning with her neglected childhood. The young Mary likes to read "tales of woe," and as an adult she moves woefully through a world of sick and dying people, of disappointment and poverty. (Like Scott's Bluestockings, she does charity work whenever she can rouse herself from her "death-like sadness" and "apathy" [23].) The style is defiantly different, alternating between blunt, sketchy sentences and rhapsodies to "sensibility" (see pp. 862–63 below), along with some Old Testament fulminations against society. (Mary has a touch of religious mania as well as clinical depression.) *Mary* is underdeveloped, underdramatized—we're told more than we're shown—which is evidently deliberate: in her preface, Wollstonecraft calls her novella "an artless tale, without episodes," meaning that she has left out all the linguistic and dramatic stuffing that could have expanded this 60-page novella into a conventional three-volume novel. Taut and bleak, *Mary* portrays the difficulties an unconventional young woman faces when forced to educate

herself and find a place in a world that has no place for unconventional women like her.

After publishing *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* in 1792, Wollstonecraft planned to write a second part to her manifesto, but then decided instead to dramatize her views in a novel entitled *The Wrongs of Woman* (aka *Maria*). It's unfortunate that she died after writing only a third of it, for those 100 pages (and the 14 pages of drafts and fragments that her husband William Godwin published along with them in 1798) have the makings of a major novel. Its purpose is clear: to exhibit "the misery and oppression, peculiar to women, that arise out of the partial laws and customs of society" (Preface), along with "bitter reflections on the situation of women in society."[294] The main story concerns a sensitive girl named Maria who is pushed too early into marriage by her tyrannical father, then mistreated by her boorish, unfaithful husband for six years until she walks out on him. Since she's the heiress to a fortune, he tracks her down and arranges to confine her to a madhouse—a common ploy back then. (A subplot of Smollett's *Sir Launcelot Greaves* dramatizes a similar situation.) There she meets a well-read man named Darnford who was likewise railroaded by greedy relatives; considering herself divorced from her husband, Maria cohabits with him and, after they escape from the madhouse, agrees to live with him. While he's away in Paris trying to recover his money, Maria's husband hauls her into court and sues her for adultery. She makes an eminently reasonable defense of her actions, but is found guilty by the judge, who "always determined to oppose all innovation, and the newfangled notions which encroached on the good old rules of conduct" (17). There the finished portion ends; Wollstonecraft's notes indicate that Maria later learns Darnford has been unfaithful to her in Paris and decides to end it all by overdosing on laudanum. Several interpolated stories concern the wrongs done to other women, indicating the systemic nature of female oppression.

Unlike the conservative judge, Wollstonecraft is all for innovation and structures her novel contrary to the good old rules of fiction. She begins with Maria awaking in the madhouse, with Gothic imagery suggesting she's trapped in a castle "filled with spectres and chimeras" (1), brilliantly launching the pattern of bondage imagery that runs throughout the novel,

for “Was not the world a vast prison and women born slaves?” (1).[295] Uncertain of her future or the whereabouts of her baby girl, Maria pens an autobiographical letter to her daughter, but the author postpones conveying the contents to us. First she wants to establish Maria’s intellectual bona fides, dramatized as she reads and comments on the books she borrows from Darnford, especially Rousseau’s *Julie*, and which establishes them as intellectual soul-mates before they even meet. Only after she meets and comes to trust him does she give him/us the manuscript to read (chapters 7–14), and to make sure we take away the right message from it, she has Danford restate its thesis: “ ‘the absurdity of the laws respecting matrimony, which, till divorces could be more easily obtained, was,’ he declared, ‘the most insufferable bondage. Ties of this nature could not bind minds governed by superior principles; and such beings were privileged to act above the dictates of laws they had no voice in framing, if they had sufficient strength of mind to endure the natural consequence’ ” (15). *The Wrongs of Woman* is as didactic as any other Bluestocking novel, but Wollstonecraft structures her novel so that the didacticism is organic: Maria’s memoir is not a novel—where didacticism is a downer—but a feminist alternative to the conservative conduct books of her day, like *A Father’s Legacy to His Daughters* (1774), a popular book by John Gregory that Wollstonecraft criticizes in *A Vindication*. Even the didactic message is complicated when we learn from Wollstonecraft’s notes that “minds governed by superior principles” can also make mistakes: Darnford is unfaithful, and Maria lacks the “strength of mind” to persevere. Those are the choices a *novelist* makes, not a polemicist, and Wollstonecraft’s superior use of figurative language, literary allusion, and dramatization (compared to *Mary*) indicates she was well on her way to becoming a first-rate novelist when she died of complications resulting from childbirth. (Fortunately, the child lived, and went on to write *Frankenstein*.) Even in its unfinished state, *The Wrongs of Woman* is a powerful, consciousness-raising achievement.

Wollstonecraft admired a novel that had appeared a few years earlier by her friend Mary Hays (1759–1843) entitled *Memoirs of Emma Courtney* (1796). Like *Mary*, it features a bookish romantic contemptuous of conventional rules for women, and like *The Wrongs of Woman* it takes the form of a memoir intended for a child. Like so many late-18th-century

British heroines, Emma Courtney is orphaned before she reaches her twenties, then falls in love with the son of one of her benefactors. Defying the rule that a woman should never reveal her love for a man, Emma lets Augustus Harley know that she would be honored to become his wife, an offer he sidesteps for a mysterious reason. In subsequent letters to him, she badgers him to reveal his secret, letters which he ignores for months at a time. This understandably drives Emma crazy, especially since—as a miseducated woman raised only for marriage—she has no other interests: "The social propensities of a mind forbidden to expand itself, forced back, preyed incessantly upon that mind, secretly consuming its powers" (2.10). Eventually learning he's secretly married, Emma reluctantly accepts the marriage proposal of another man who has been hounding her for years. Fate—or rather, melodramatic plotting—brings Harley back into her life a few years later when he suffers an accident near her house (recalling their initial meeting, when Emma helped him after another accident), dying right after he asks Emma to raise his son from that secret marriage. Further melodrama (infidelity, infanticide, suicide) removes her unloved husband from the picture, and many years later, Emma writes this memoir for her adopted son, also named Augustus Harley.

Like Wollstonecraft's earlier works, which Emma has read and quotes, Hays's novel seethes with justified outrage at "the customs of society" that "have enslaved, enervated, and degraded women," a society in which men can "pursue interest, honor, pleasure, as accords with their several dispositions," while women "remain insulated beings, and must be content merely to look on, without taking part in the great, though often absurd and tragical, drama of life" (1.13, 26). Emma is smart enough to know there's "something strangely wrong in the constitutions of society," and while she recognizes that a "reformation" is underway, she suffers a "moral martyrdom" (2.37) because she lacks the independent means to do anything about it—except write about it. It doesn't occur to this well-read woman to write a novel, but fortunately William Godwin adviced Mary Hays to do so, and in acknowledgment she includes a character based on him. (Many of Emma's letters to "Mr. Francis" are taken verbatim from hers to Godwin.) *Emma Courtney* is a refreshing change from most British novels of the period. Emma dares to be different, scorns the rules young women are expected to follow out of "delicacy" (how I've grown to loathe that word!),

displays her learning by citing numerous philosophers, voices bold opinions (she calls soldiers "murderers"), and expresses herself in a fleet, unencumbered style that replicates the darting activity of her sharp mind. "On my return to my friends," the young Emma writes, "I quickly regained my health and spirits; was active, blythsome, ran, bounded, sported, romped; always light, gay, alert, and full of glee" (1.3). The sketchy style serves her well in times of high emotion: "He struggled to free himself from me—my apprehensions gave me strength—I held him with a strenuous grasp—he raved—he stamped—he tore his hair—his passion became frenzy!" (2.24). As Emma struggles to free herself from restrictive customs, Hays frees herself from the heavy furniture of the formal English sentence. *Emma Courtney* is a compelling dramatization of the gender inequalities that inspired the founding of the Bluestocking Society a half-century earlier, and an acute psychological analysis of the kind of martyrdom some women suffer, and will suffer, as long as those inequalities persist.

Wollstonecraft liked *Emma Courtney*, but Elizabeth Hamilton (1758–1816) loathed it, and four years later mocked it in *Memoirs of Modern Philosophers* (1800). Outraged by Hays's novel and especially by Godwin's anarcho-utopian *Enquiry Concerning Political Justice* (1793), Hamilton dramatizes the dangers such works pose for women by way of the intertwined stories of three teenagers living in an English village: Bridgetina Botherim (a cruel caricature of Hays), an enthusiastic reader of anarchist philosophy who chases after a man who has no interest in the squat, squinty, shrill egghead; Julia Delmond, whose weaknesses for romance novels facilitates her conversion to Godwin's philosophy by a sleazy opportunist; and Harriet Orwell, a Christian angel who doesn't read anything. (She's read *to.*) Bridgetina and Julia belong to a group of radicals —which includes Godwin as "Benjamin Myope" and the Goddess of Reason visiting from Paris—who plan to join what they believe is the perfect society of the Hottentots in southern Africa, but both come to grief before leaving England, while dutiful, thoughtless Harriet remains virtuous. An accurate and funny/sad account of how young women can get swept up in radical movements they don't understand, *Modern Philosophers* overshoots its target by arguing that it's stupid for women to think there is a "nobler path to glory than the quiet duties of domestic life." "Whether the unrelenting laws of society with regard to our sex are founded in justice or

otherwise is not for me to determine," born-again Julia acquiesces near the end. "Happy they who submit without reluctance to their authority!" (3.13). And that authority goes all the way to the top: on her deathbed Julia wishes "I had been taught to devote the actions of every day to my God . . . instead of encouraging a gloomy and querulous discontent against the present order of things" (3.14), as Wollstonecraft and Hays do in their novels. *Memoirs of Emma Courtney* is written in liberated first-person; *Memoirs of Modern Philosophers* is written in authoritarian third-person.

But this smarmy, reactionary novel has its moments, partly because Hamilton sounds like Swift eviscerating the "modern philosophers" of a century earlier, and partly because Hamilton goes after bad novelists as viciously as she does bad philosophers. Though at one point she has Julia praise Cervantes and Fielding, Hamilton obviously didn't think much of novelists: after Bridgetina writes a speech filled with such phrases as "mental sensation, pernicious state of protracted and uncertain feeling, congenial sympathy, delicious emotions," and so on, the author adds this at the bottom of the page:

> Note, for the benefit of novel-writers.—We here generously present the fair manufacturers in this line with a set of phrases which, if carefully mixed up with a handful of story, a pretty quantity of moonshine, an old house of any kind, so that it be in sufficient decay and well-tenanted with bats and owls and two or three ghosts, will make a couple of very neat volumes. Or should the sentimental be preferred to the descriptive, it is only leaving out the ghosts, bats, owls, and moonlight, and the above phrases will season any tender tale to taste. (3.4)

Hamilton is just as hard on novel-readers: like some novelists of the 1750s, she likes to taunt her readers, as though she suspects they are as gullible as Julia. Her disdain for the genre is obvious from the first page, which actually begins in the middle of chapter 5 because (its fictitious editor explains) the first 50 pages of the manuscript were "torn off to kindle the morning fire" by its previous owner. She mocks novelistic tropes like a character's secret noble birth, adventures on the road, and tyrannical parents, and sometimes stops the story to discuss her authorial options on how to proceed. At one point, after writing that an upper-class female

character receives “a hearty welcome” wherever she goes, she imagines a u-c female reader’s likely response:

> “A welcome!” repeats some lovely fair one, as with a yawn she throws down the book at the conclusion of the last chapter. “La! how vulgar! What a bore to find one’s friends at home! I am fatigued to death at the very thoughts of it. What odd notions these low authors have of the manners of the fashionable world!”
>
> Stay, dear lady, and be convinced that we are not so ignorant, or so little accustomed to the world of fashion, as you seem to imagine. Well do we know that in dropping your tickets [card] at the splendid dwellings of the *dear friends*, whose names ye in return expect to swell your porter’s list, ye have neither end nor object in view but the gratification of your own vanity; a vanity which might be somewhat humbled were ye obliged to witness the mortification that would be inflicted on your *dear friends* by your tiresome and insipid company. (3.3)

Dayum! Earlier novelists teased their readers, but they rarely *insulted* them. In the novel’s concluding chapter, Hamilton notes that “the serious part of our readers may, perhaps, be of opinion that with the last chapter our history ought probably to have concluded; . . . But how could we have the heart to disappoint the Misses by closing our narrative without a wedding.” She will marry off the principals (Christian Barbie and her Ken doll boyfriend), but “we cannot possibly contrive to marry every individual of our dramatis personae in the last scene. [¶] ‘And pray, why not?’ exclaims a pretty critic,” the first of five Misses who suggest hackneyed ways of pairing up the rest. Hamilton spends the remainder of the conclusion shooting down their suggestions, though the sappy Christian ending she *does* provide is as hackneyed as any sentimental novel. Hamilton’s religiosity and rejection of gender issues is reactionary, but her rejection of romance clichés is progressive and may have turned some of her audience into better readers, which seems to have been Hamilton’s purpose. As Katherine Binhammer argues, “Hamilton is not censuring *what* one reads but *how* one reads”—Bridgetina and Julia make the mistake of confusing theory (political and romantic) with practice—and by her metafictional remarks to the Misses

hopes to "transform the female reader from a consumer into a critic."[296] This disqualifies Harriet as a model: she's never "run wild in the fairy field of fiction" (2.4), but she couldn't exist outside the pages of a sentimental novel, and is by inference an *un*critical reader of the Bible. Nonetheless, Hamilton shared with the other novelists in this section a deep concern for women's education, though I suspect she wore black rather than blue stockings.

ORIENTAL TALES

The enormous popularity of Samuel Johnson's *Rasselas* (1759) reminded publishers and writers of the ongoing appeal of Oriental tales, so they responded with a number of such works over the next 40 years, including a bland sequel to *Rasselas* by Ellis Cornelia Knight called *Dinarbas* (1790), in which Rasselas finds happiness in marriage, turning Johnson's frowning novel into a smile. (Henceforth, the two novels were often coupled in a single volume.) With one exotic exception, however, most of these works are forgettable; a few writers took advantage of "the political resonance of a form which presents a potentially powerful critique of the conservative ideology implicit in the then-dominant forms of realistic prose fiction," Robert L. Mack argues, and wrote things they "might not otherwise have been capable of writing in a more realistic form of fiction."[297] But Robert Irwin seems closer to the mark: "In general, English writers working in the Oriental mode failed to match the wit and licentiousness of their French contemporaries. Indeed, most English Oriental tales tended to be leadenly moral" (242).

Johnson's friend John Hawkesworth (1720–73) had published several Oriental tales in the 1750s in his magazine the *Adventurer* (modeled on Johnson's *Rambler*) before writing a short novel entitled *Almoran and Hamet* (1761). This too was sometimes paired with *Rasselas* in later editions because they share a common theme—"suppress the wishes which thou canst not fulfill, and secure the happiness that is within thy reach"[298] —but *Almoran and Hamet* is much closer to *The Arabian Nights* in style and substance. The title characters are twin sons of the king of Persia, who

makes them coregents upon his death. Ambitious Almaron is selfish and tyrannical, while humble Hamet is passive and cooperative; since they represent extremes, the king had hoped they would balance each other on the throne, but they are polarized after the arrival of Almeida, the fair-skinned daughter of the ambassador of Circassia. She favors Hamet after he rescues her from a fire, and at that point a genie appears to aid Almaron in his desire for her, which involves mysterious public announcements, strange weather, and a talisman that allows Almoran to switch bodies with others. After some further complications that test the resolve of both Ameida and Hamet, the good brother triumphs over the bad one, whom the genie turns to stone, for he too was impersonating an evil genie to test Almoran. The short novel is a fair imitation of a tale from *The Arabian Nights*, aided by the presence of a wise counselor, a eunuch-guarded seraglio, a dungeon, references to Muhammad and the Quran, scimitars, and other Oriental trappings. But the novel is also an allegory of occidental concerns: Almoran's reliance on phony miracles associates him with superstitious Catholicism, in contrast to Hamet's Protestant-like morality, and in the twins' different political styles it's easy to see an allegory of absolute monarchism versus parliamentary government. The novel is dedicated to the newly crowned George III, whom Hawkesworth hoped would recognize the superiority of the latter.

A newly crowned king is likewise featured in *The History of Nourjahad* (1767), which Frances Sheridan penned in between the two volumes of *Sidney Bidulph*, and which superficially couldn't be more different from those dreary soap operas. Sultan Schemzeddin of Persia is tempted to make his childhood friend Nourjahad his prime minister, but his counselors advise against that, arguing that he is avaricious, irreligious, and licentious. The sultan decides to test him by way of an elaborate ruse (which isn't revealed until 10 pages from the end) in which a genie offers Nourjahad endless riches and immortality, but with a catch: every time he deviates from "sober and regular conduct" he will fall asleep for an extended period. Needless to say, newly rich Nourjahad deviates and is punished: he gets drunk, and sleeps for four years; he commits blasphemy and is knocked out for 40 years; he murders an old woman in a rage and is sentenced to 20 years of sleep-time. He finally realizes the errors of his ways, decides to commit himself to "temperance and decency," and begins distributing his

vast fortune to the deserving poor. Shortly after, Schemzeddin reveals the complicated game he has been playing over the last 14 months, and lays down the leaden moral: "Let this dream of existence then be a lesson to thee for the future, never to suppose that riches can ensure happiness; that the gratification of our passions can satisfy the human heart; or that the immortal part of our nature will suffer us to taste unmixed felicity in a world which was never meant to be our final place of abode."[299]

Nourjahad is an ingenious imitation of Arabian fiction (which features similar stories of such ruses), and Nourjahad himself an intriguing character: at first, he displays Faustian ambitions to use his wealth and immortality to travel the world, consult the learned, and develop a godlike view of history, all while indulging his passions to the hilt. Realizing immortality bars him from paradise, he defies heaven by attempting to create his own paradise: in the novella's raciest and most blasphemous episode, he asks his harem girls to dress up like the houris of the Islamic paradise—they argue about what to wear: some want to go naked, but they settle on dresses "of the thinnest Persian gauze" (150)—and gets his favorite concubine to impersonate Muhammad's first wife, while he plans to play the prophet. Unfortunately, for him and the reader, Sheridan puts him to sleep before the blasphemous orgy commences (there's a word for women like her) but the preparations are enough to earn Sheridan a *fatwa*. On the one hand, Nourjahad is a weak man who can't resist temptation; on the other, he is "self dependent for [his] own happiness or misery" (192), which may sound admirable to modern readers but is sinful under both Islam and Sheridan's Christianity, for only their gods can dispense those qualities. (One of the unintended consequences of Sheridan's tale is to reveal that Islam and Christianity have more in common than their followers realize.) The moral of Sheridan's fairy tale fails because she's as deluded as Nourjahad regarding a god and immortality—like it or not, we are indeed self dependent for our own happiness or misery—and Nourjahad was right to attempt to create paradise on earth: not necessarily by staging orgies but by using his wealth at the end to improve the lives of others. Despite its conduct-book message, *Nourjahad* is a cunning artifact and one of the most successful examples of the Anglo-Oriental tale.

A decade after publishing the popular *Chrysal*, Charles Johnstone returned with *The History of Arsaces, Prince of Betlis* (1774), a mediocre novel set in the 7th century. After defeating the prophet Muhammad in battle, a general asks an intriguing prisoner-of war named Selim to tell his story. A rambling, episodic tale follows for three-fourths of the novel, after which the general frees Selim to fight on his side, which eventually leads him into battle against the king of Betlis, who turns out to be Selim's father. Recovering his birth name, Prince Arsaces marries his beloved, and the novel concludes with the fatalistic moral "that true wisdom consisteth in humble obedience to the will of heaven, without arrogantly presuming to scan its ways" (2.4.7). There are a few wonders, like a subterranean city populated by bug-eyed dwarfs, and interpolated stories in the manner of *The Arabian Nights*, but "not one soft scene of love," the author assures us in his preface, "or sentiment of loose desire," primly forgoing the erotic possibilities of an exotic setting that the French were happy to exploit.

It is perhaps for that reason that the most famous and influential Anglo-Oriental novel of the 18th century was written in French. *Vathek* (1786) was composed in 1782 by the 21-year-old William Beckford (1760–1844), who turned it over to his tutor, an Orientalist named Samuel Henley, to translate into English. With Beckford's encouragement and occasional participation, Henley also added voluminous, erudite notes to the short novel, which—along with the researches of later scholars—reveal that *Vathek* is not what it appears to be when reprinted, as is often the case, without these notes: it is not a bizarrely imaginative opium-dream of a novel, but a creative collage of Arabian tropes, myths, and superstitions culled from dozens of books, ranging from scholarly tomes like d'Herbelot's *Bibliothèque orientale* (1697) to Galland's translation of *The Arabian Nights* and the French imitations that followed, specifically those by Anthony Hamilton, whom Beckford named as his primary inspiration. But knowing where Beckford got the ingredients for his Arabian feast doesn't detract from the phantasmagorical results.

Vathek, an actual 9th-century caliph (al-Wathik Bi'llah) who was a patron of the arts and sciences, becomes in Beckford's hands a hedonistic aesthete whose genuine intellectual curiosity is perverted by his evil Greek mother Carathis, who takes advantage of her "hare-brained" son's "love of the

marvelous" and "insatiable curiosity" to lead him to the dark side.[300] She encourages him to visit the underworld, where a prophecy promises to reward him with "the talismans that control the world" and "the treasures of the pre-Adamite sultans" (which she plans to share) and advices him to ignore the alternative prophecy that warns "Woe to the rash mortal who seeks to know that of which he should remain ignorant, and to undertake that which surpasseth his power" (11). An Indian merchant convinces him to renounce Islam and offer a human sacrifice of 50 boys, which Vathek does (though we later learn that they are spirited away to a kind of heaven for boys who remain forever young; not uncoincidentally, bisexual Beckford caused a scandal at the time by consorting with a 13-year-old lad). On the road to hell, Vathek picks up a gold-digging girl named Nouronihar, and eventually they arrive at the hall of hell, where a "throng of Genii and other fantastic spirits of either sex danced lasciviously at the sound of music, which issued from beneath" (109). There they meet the owner of Club Hell, Eblis (the Muslim Satan), a young man with large eyes and flowing hair, who sadly informs them that they can enjoy the talismans of power only for a few days, after which they are damned to eternity. Beckford's sublime description of hell is followed by a ridiculous moral that seems to parody the ones with which earlier British writers concluded their Oriental fables: "the condition of man upon earth is to be—humble and ignorant" (120).

Vathek is impressive because it is excessive, for Beckford took fuller advantage of the liberties available in the Oriental genre than his British and French predecessors. *Vathek* is more opulent, more outrageous, more sensuous, more violent, more blasphemous, more shocking—and at times more ridiculous. (There are enough authorial winks and nudges to indicate we shouldn't take this lurid stuff *too* seriously.) There is more drunkeness and feasting, more stripping and nudity, more random sex acts: just before Vathek's caravan leaves for the Palace of Subterranean Fire, some "gallants" sneak into the carriage containing his harem and start humping the girls before they are driven off by the eunuchs; while Carathis visits a cemetery, her Negresses make out with ghouls. There are more supernatural effects, more magical animals—talking fish, Muslim bees, a demonic camel—more drugs, more vertiginous heights, vaster halls, deeper gulfs, more

exquisite perfumes and fouler stenches, more everything. Verging on sensory overload, *Vathek* is the literary equivalent of a riotous weekend in Vegas, and bequeathed to literature the concept of decadence: its influence can be seen in the writings of Lautréamont, Gautier, Poe, Swinburne, Mallarmé (who wrote a preface for a French edition), Huysmans, Wilde, and Lovecraft, where hyperaesthetic sensibility, occultism, and abnormal sex come together in a hideously beautiful way. *Vathek* also left its mark on the Gothic novel, Romantic literature (Byron was a huge fan), the grotesque, and supernatural fiction.

While waiting to hear their fate in hell, Vathek and Nouronihar listen to the tales of three other sinners awaiting judgment: these are the *Episodes of Vathek* that Beckford intended to publish in the same volume as *Vathek* before Rev. Henley spoiled his plan by rushing the latter into print (and claiming it was an anonymous tale translated from the Arabic). The three episodes that survive focus on sexual transgression—pedophilia, rape, and incest—and push Beckford's work even further beyond the bounds of 18th-century decorum.[301] Together, *Vathek* and the *Episodes* represent the most "powerful critique of the conservative ideology implicit in the then-dominant forms of realistic prose fiction" (to quote Mack again), for even though Vathek is dutifully punished at the end, Beckford takes and gives too much pleasure in his reckless characters and their contemptuous disregard for conventional behavior, and like Vathek (but unlike his Calvinist mother) he did not think that "it was necessary to make a hell of this world to enjoy paradise in the next" (1).

We're not through with Beckford (see pp. 894–97 below), but we're through with the 18th-century Oriental novel, for no one could top *Vathek*.

MIXED MEDIA

A few weeks after the debut of George Colman's first play *Polly Honeycombe* at the Drury Lane Theater on 5 December 1760, Colman (1732–94) published a book version with the unusual subtitle *A Dramatic Novel of One Act.* A satire on naïve readers, it dramatizes a hectic day in the life of a teenager addicted to novels, for "A novel is the only thing to teach a girl life, and the way of the world"—which, for better or for worse, was

true, given the limited education girls received then. Polly Honeycombe is in love with a law clerk named Scribble, who craftily speaks and writes to her in novelese. “He writes as well as Bob Lovelace,” gushes this Richardson fan, and later fishes for a compliment by asking him, “D’ye think I am as handsome as Clarissa, or Clementine, or Pamela, or Sophy Western, or Amelia, or Narcissa, or—.” When Polly’s parents insist she marry a businessman instead, she laments, “I am now for all the world just in the situation of poor Clarissa,” and vows to use the unwelcome suitor “worse than Nancy Howe ever did Mr. Hickman.” When her parents persist, she attempts to elope with Scribble, citing numerous examples of the heroines of novels high and low—she doesn’t distinguish between *Tom Jones* and *The History of Dick Careless*—and after she is caught and returned home, she vows she will have Scribble “though we go through as many distresses as Booth and Amelia,” and exits, but not before telling her parents’ choice of husband “I hate you. You are as deceitful as Blifil, as rude as the Harlowes, and as ugly as Doctor Slop.” After everyone leaves the stage, her exasperated father turns to the audience and complains “a man might as well turn his daughter loose in Covent Garden as trust the cultivation of her mind to A CIRCULATING LIBRARY.”[302]

It’s an unconventional ending for an “afterpiece” (usually a comic playlet that followed the evening’s main play), which Mr. Honeycombe acknowledges as he breaks the fourth wall: “Instead of happiness and jollity —my friends and family about me, a wedding and a dance, and everything as it should be—here I am, left by myself: deserted by my intended son-in-law, bullied by an attorney’s clerk, my daughter mad, my wife in the vapors, and all’s in confusion.” Equally unconventional is the preface Colman wrote for the book version, in which he not only defends his violation of “the received laws of the drama,” but concludes with a long letter from his mother, who transcribes for his benefit the catalog of her circulating library: four double-columned pages in small type listing some 180 titles from *The Accomplished Rake* to *Zulima, or Pure Love*, which includes most of the pre-1760 18th-century British novels I’ve discussed so far (and some French translations), along with things like *The Intriguing Coxcomb* and *The Life and Opinions of Miss Sukey Shandy*—all real.[303] *Polly Honeycomb* is a nose-thumbing work: a play subtitled a dramatic novel, a

comedy that forgoes a comic ending, and a satire about novels that makes no distinction between literary classics and commercial trash. It's amusing in a predictable way, but sobering to see what the common reader makes of uncommon works.

The Disguise: A Dramatic Novel (1771) is a more deliberate hybrid of play and novel. In the preface, its anonymous author explains why s/he made this "unprecedented attempt": "Epistolizing, journalizing, and narrating have been so hackneyed that novels grow unprofitable to the writer and insipid to the reader." The author worries about female readers in particular: "a most melancholy deprivation of anything new" in fiction might drive them to "seek those adventures in the world which ceased to be offered to them in books." With tongue in cheek, the author concludes, "In this hour of danger, philanthropy suggested that a new mode might revive the drooping spirit of romance, and that when epistolary correspondencies were grown dull, narratives tedious, and journals heavy, dialogue might supply the place." Consequently, the novel physically resembles a play, including divisions into acts and scenes and a list of dramatis personae. The novelty of the form matches that of the content: the "hero" of the novel is a 19-year-old man wearing a dress and calling himself Harriet. Because his mother suspected his evil uncle of poisoning her other male children to obtain their inheritance, Lady Edmonds raised her son Harry as a girl, and he is now chafing at petticoats and uncertain how to prosecute his love for his neighbor Emilia. She is "struck with astonishment" at the warmth of Harriet's advances, while he has to deal with the unwanted attentions of both a young man *and* his rakish father. But the author downplays homoerotic implications to focus on tyrannical fathers, for Harriet, Emilia, her sister Caroline, and Caroline's male admirer, Lord Lessingham, are all being forced by their parents to marry against their wills.

Instead of a comedy of errors, *The Disguise* is a harsh look at patriarchy, the institution of marriage, and the question of filial duty. Forced to behave like a woman, Harry is disgusted at what women have to put up with and is grateful that he is a man; he is tempted to cane a scoundrel at one point, but resorts to feminine "wiles" to eel out of his engagement to the old rake and remains in drag all the way to the end. Although the theme of patriarchal tyranny was old hat by 1771 (though the practice was still in full force), *The Disguise* is a valiant attempt to view it from a fresh angle; the language is

rather stiff—unlike the delightfully fluent *Polly Honeycombe*—and the serious discussions of marriage, education, and the oppression of women sound out place in the mouths of the novel's teenage protagonists, but the novelty of a hero in petticoats keeps it interesting. Because Lessingham is rational and dutiful, he self-deprecatingly allows "I should make no figure in romance, but a poor one indeed in a modern novel" (1.5), a metafictional aside on the author's daring decision to give the devoted lover's role to a man in drag. The author apparently felt s/he was pushing the envelope of decency far enough with such a "heterogeneous" protagonist, for there are no blatant double entendres nor scenes in which Harry takes advantage of his situation with as much passion as Celadon does in *Astrea*. But apparently some still found it beyond the pale: the two major book-review journals of the day, the *Monthly Review* and Smollett's *Critical Review*, both panned it without saying a word about the crossdressing plot, as though afraid of shocking (or tempting?) circulating library patrons.

Louisa: A Poetical Novel in Four Epistles (1784) by Anna Seward (1742–1809) is the first, I believe, to identify itself as a novel in verse. In her preface, Seward says she was inspired by Matthew Prior's "Henry and Emma" (1708) and Alexander Pope's "Eloisa to Abelard" (1717), two relatively short narrative poems set in the Middle Ages, along with Rousseau's *Julie* for one scene. Though written in couplets of iambic pentameter, *Louisa*'s content, Seward apparently felt, justified calling it a novel. As the subtitle indicates, the novella consists of four letters: in the first, the virginal, nature-loving Louisa tells her childhood friend Emma (now in the East Indies) how she fell for but was dumped by a friend of her brother's named Eugenio, and how she took refuge in religion and "scenic objects." A year and a half later, Eugenio writes Emma to explain that his father pressured him to marry a rich heiress named Emira (who had fallen for Eugenio after he rescued her from an attempted rape) in order to save the family from financial ruin. Emma forwards the letter to Louisa, who responds with joyous relief that Eugenio had a noble motive for dumping her, and in her fourth letter Louisa tells Emma how Emira neglected Eugenio and their baby girl to indulge in masquerades and dangerous liaisons, contracted a fever, and died, clearing the way for

> The sacred union of the kindred mind.

Heaven reunites them! and the wretch removes
That impious rose between their plighted loves. (146)

As those lines indicate, the verse is as unremarkable as the plot, but poetic license allows Seward to express emotions with an intensity that would be ludicrous in a prose novel. Louisa's love of nature justifies the extensive use of atmospheric conditions as metaphors for Louisa's feelings—her blushes evoke a sunset, her sorrow "the wint'ry storm"—which fulfills Seward's stated objective in the preface to provide "a description of passions than of incidents" (97). Powerful feelings and sensitivity to nature align *Louisa* with both the sentimental novel (which we'll get to next) and to Romanticism, but it's a period piece with limited appeal today. But at least Seward, like the author of *The Disguise*, tried something different; as overwrought and sentimental as *Louisa* is, it would have been far worse as a conventional prose novel.

Poet Helen Maria Williams (1762–1827) devised a compromise in *Julia, a Novel Interspersed with Poetical Pieces* (1790). Initially, the novel promises to be about the development of a poet named Julia Clifford, who "discovered at a very early age a particular sensibility to poetry."[304] She composes her first poem at age eight, and at age 19 (in the novel's present) she writes a 28-stanza "Address to Poetry" that announces her devotion to the art and names some of her influences. Williams intersperses further poems throughout the novel, but also includes numerous quotations from poems and plays along with poetic phrasing and extended metaphors.[305] But unfortunately, Julia's poetic vocation fades into the background as the novel turns from wry social satire into a sermon on the dangers of romantic triangles like those depicted Rousseau's *Julie* and especially in Goethe's *Werther*—which Julia discusses in chapter 32 with Frederick Seymour, the Werther of *Julia*. Seymour had originally fallen for Julia's cousin Charlotte, but after he meets the prettier and smarter Julia, he regrets his commitment to Charlotte. But he's also committed to British society's sense of "honor," so even though Julia admires Seymour, they both repress their feelings and he marries Charlotte, sacrificing their personal happiness to the impersonal, stifling status quo that Williams has been satirizing.[306] He dies of a fever at the birth of his first child, and Julia never marries.

Interestingly, the novel is set in 1776 and mentions the American Revolution; even more interestingly, the last poem in the book is "The Bastille: A Vision," a 12-stanza rallying cry in which a political prisoner foresees "Freedom's sacred temples rise." So even though the author insists the moral of the tale is for readers "to guard against the influence of passion" (34), we should once again heed Lawrence's advice ("Never trust the artist. Trust the tale.") and ask what these references to revolution are telling us. Too timid to revolt against an antiquated sense of honor, too willing to sentence themselves to a life of misery, *Julia*'s protagonists are tragic examples of sensitive people too brainwashed to revolt against their oppressive culture, and too cowardly to engage in the pursuit of happiness. Julia doesn't write the Bastille poem (a visitor from France reads it to her and Charlotte), but it condemns her. She abandons her poetry career, and instead seeks "consolation in the duties of religion, the exercise of benevolence, and the society of persons of understanding and merit" (34). Fittingly, the poetic style is abandoned as Williams summarizes the denouement in plain prose. *Julia* is a fascinating example how form and diction, rather than authorial intention, can determine meaning: the author apparently regarded the American and French revolutions as a call for *social* equality, ignoring their call for *personal* liberty as well—a call her conformist protagonists don't hear, but heard by the attentive reader.

This section is the best place for a short novel that, according to one of its modern editors, "both borrows from and originates a variety of literary genres and subgenres without fitting neatly into any of them."[307] *Castle Rackrent, an Hiberian Tale* (1800) by Maria Edgeworth (1767–1849) is the first-person account by an illiterate, 90-year-old Irishman named Thady Quirk of four generations of the rich Rackrent family, which he has proudly served as steward, sharing their admiration for such holdings as the bog of Allyballycarricko'shaughlin. The head of each generation displays a different, flawed managerial style and Thady notes the hardships they entailed on the common people, along with examples of legal and political corruption. Although he gives an honest account of their failings, his loyalty to his masters clouds his judgment of these reprehensible landowners and blinds him to the fact that *his* family—represented by his opportunistic son Jason—triumphs over them and takes possession of Castle Rackrent at the

end. It's an early and brilliant use of the unreliable narrator—not unreliable in facts but in their significance. As Thady describes the physical house, he is unaware he is describing the decay of the "house" of Rackrent: "There was great silence in Castle Rackrent, and I went moping from room to room, hearing the doors clap for want of right locks, and the wind through the broken windows that the glazier never would come to mend, and the rain coming through the roof and best ceilings all over the house, for want of the slater whose bill was not paid, besides our having no slates or shingles for that part of the old building which was shingled, and burnt when the chimney took fire and has been open to the weather ever since" (61).

As Kirkpatrick notes, the novella is a mixed breed: "Combining the subtle wit of the French tale, the Gaelic cadences of Irish oral tradition, and Gothic intrigue over property and inheritance, *Castle Rackrent* has gathered a dazzling array of firsts—the first regional novel, the first socio-historical, the first Irish novel, the first Big House novel,[308] the first saga novel" (vii). I would contest all but the Big House first, but they attest to the generic diversity of Edgeworth's novella. In addition, Thady Quirk's "Hibernian tale" is accompanied by explanatory footnotes and a lengthy glossary by an "editor," which makes the novella look like an ethnological report on an exotic tribe. Though primarily an exposé of Irish landowning policies, *Castle Rackrent* is a successful experiment in genre and narrativity. Edgeworth went on to write other novels, but none as quirky and cute (as the Irish would say) as this one.

ROAD ROMANCES

By this designation I mean "that species of modern romance which Cervantes first introduced in Spain, which Le Sage and Marivaux imported into France, and on which the late Mr. Fielding and one or two living authors have exercised their talents successfully in England," as Tobias Smollett wrote in 1763 (and undoubtedly including himself among those "one or two living authors").[309] He was reviewing an anonymous novel entitled *The Peregrinations of Jeremiah Grant*, which—like *Gil Blas* and Smollett's own early novels—features a spirited protagonist who yo-yos

through a variety of adventures high and low while traveling extensively. "This kind of romance is a diffused comedy unrestrained by the rules of drama," Smollett goes on to say, "comprehending a great variety of incident and character," which certainly describes *Jeremiah Grant*. Born and raised in Jamaica, Grant travels to England at age 14 to be educated, runs away from school, starves, almost joins the army, returns to Jamaica, inherits a fortune, returns to England and blows through it, joins the army long enough to get shot through the head, works as a Grub Street reviewer—his accusation that publishers pay reviewers to puff their books outraged Smollett, editor of the *Critical Review*—makes a whirlwind tour of Europe, helps a nun escape from her convent but is captured and almost executed by the Portuguese Inquisition—the nun, however, is raped before his eyes and burned to death, graphic scenes that shocked Smollett—then gets mixed up the in the slave trade in Africa, sails to Buenos Aires disguised as a Capuchin friar, and finally makes it back to Jamaica, where he marries his patient sweetheart and inherits his dead brother's plantation.

Two things are remarkable about the novel: the racial element and its high degree of intertextuality. Born of a Scottish father and a Creole mother, Grant is "of a Numidian hue" and experiences some racial prejudice when he first goes to London, though not as much as one would expect, and none thereafter. (Indeed, I suspect the author forgot that his protagonist was black after a while.) But his mixed race gives added weight to Grant's observations on slavery, both as practiced in the West Indies and especially in Africa, where he gives a detailed, caustic account of how Europeans acquired their "merchandise." The novel is also filled with references to other novels—*Don Quixote*, *Gil Blas*, *Robinson Crusoe*, *Gulliver's Travels*, *Candide*—and at one point in chapter 5, the author halts his narrative and announces: "Now, by way of drawing breath, and to divert the reader and myself, I will give him three specimens of my genius for imitation: the first shall be in the Shandean style, the second in the Fieldean, and the third in the Smolletean, which I look upon to be the three originals of English romance-writing."[310] He then resumes the narratives in their successive styles, anticipating by nearly 160 years Joyce's similar procedure in the Oxen of the Sun episode of *Ulysses*. Smollett, placed in the awkward position of anonymously reviewing a novel that imitates his style, gives a

fair evaluation of the 20-page performance: “As to the Rev. Mr. St—ne, Jeremiah Grant has laid fast hold on him by his whiskers, his asterisks, his dashes, and his pothooks, but the spirit of Fielding has slipped through his fingers; and as for the other, we make no doubt but he will be proud to see himself so taken off” (18). The author is very self-conscious of other authors of his time: early on he overhears his future wife singing and provides sheet music for the song “according to the example of some recent wits” (like Toldervy in *Two Orphans*). During one of his voyages he encounters a sea captain who is a huge fan of Richardson’s “voluminous and pathetic productions” and who models his behavior on that of Sir Charles Grandison. (They also discuss *Tom Jones*, *Peregrine Pickle*, and the narrator’s favorite, *Joseph Andrews*.) In the final chapter, the author pointedly forgoes describing how Grant won back his long-neglected sweetheart, “the soft things I said to her . . . which swell the volumes of my brethren, the writers of novels”—and instead reproduces a nine-page legal document and ends the novel with a Walter Shandyesque account of how he plans to raise his son. *The Peregrinations of Jeremiah Grant* is both a knowing homage and an eccentric contribution to the road romance, a genre that “opens such an extensive and agreeable field of entertainment to all sorts of readers,” Smollett observes, “that we do not wonder to see many adventurers for fame enter these lists . . .” (13).

Smollett himself returned to these lists in 1771 with his final, finest, and funniest novel, *The Expedition of Humphry Clinker*. An ingenious use of the epistolary form, *Humphry Clinker* gathers the letters written during a comically chaotic trip through England and Scotland by a Welsh “family of originals”: a 55-year-old hypochondriac named Matthew Bramble, his 45-year-old spinster sister Tabitha, their wards Jeremy and Lydia Melford (about 20 and 17, respectively), and Tabitha’s maid Winifred Jenkins. (There are a few more letters by minor characters, though none by the title character.) Each writes in a different style and from a different point of view, which emerges as the theme of the novel: near the end, Jeremy writes to his college friend that he is “mortified to reflect what flagrant injustice we every day commit, and what absurd judgments we form, in viewing objects through the falsifying medium of prejudice and passion,” that is, from a subjective rather than objective viewpoint.[311] Smollett dramatizes

this in two ways: first, by pairing letters to express contrasting viewpoints. Matthew's cranky letter condemning the spa city of Bath is followed by Lydia's delighted one praising it; Matthew is disappointed by London, whereas Lydia is dazzled, though she realizes "People of experience and infirmity, my dear Letty, see with very different eyes from those that such as you and I make use of" (31 May)—not necessarily more accurate eyes, just different. In London, Jeremy meets a politician who sees everything through the "exaggerating medium" of partisan politics: "Without all doubt, the fumes of faction not only disturb the faculty of reason, but also pervert the organs of sense, and I would lay a hundred guineas to ten that if Barton on one side, and the most conscientious patriot in the opposition on the other, were to draw, upon honour, the picture of the k[ing] or m[inister], you and I, who are still uninfected and unbiased, would find both painters equally distant from the truth" (2 June). The unknowability of "the truth" dawns on each of the intelligent characters (Matthew, Jeremy, Lydia) as the novel progresses, each coming to realize the limitations of their points of view, though travel is certainly one way to broaden it. "Without all doubt," Jeremy writes, "the greatest advantage acquired in travelling and perusing mankind in the original is that of dispelling those shameful clouds that darken the faculties of the mind, preventing it from judging with candor and precision" (14 October). The unintelligent characters (Tabitha, Winifred, Humphry) remain unaware to the end that they are "viewing objects through the falsifying medium of prejudice and passion," and thus are quite rightly the butts of the author's humor throughout.

Second, Smollett reinforces this theme by drawing upon the novelistic tropes of disguises, mistaken identities, and unrecognized relations. In a conventional novel, the unmasking of such disguises and mistaken identities at the end is supposed to reveal the "truth" of things, and restore stability after a period of uncomfortable instability. No such comforting stability resumes at the end of *Humphry Clinker*: the intelligent characters have not necessarily learned to see clearly, only how *difficult* it is to see clearly, whereas the unintelligent have learned nothing. Winifred writes the last letter in the novel, which indicates she'll merely be exchanging one prejudicial viewpoint for another after the slight elevation of social status upon marriage, and her semiliterate orthography remains as unstable as ever

as she boasts of entering, “by the grease of God, in the holy bands of mattermoney” (20 November).

Winifred’s comically misspelled letters are one of the delights of *Humphry Clinker*. Smollett anticipates both Lewis Carroll and James Joyce in using puns not merely for laughs but for insidious insights: in the 18th century, “matrimony” was indeed a “matter[of]money,” and when Tabitha —whose spelling is only marginally better than her maid’s—writes to her housekeeper to keep an eye on a servant named Mary Jones because she “loves to be rumping with the men” (2 April), the sexual nature of Mary’s “romping” is exposed. Lydia’s properly spelled letters, on the other hand, are straight out of romance fiction—amazing, isn’t it, that none of the heroines of epistolary romances ever misspells a word—and are probably Smollett’s indication that anyone can write such stuff.[312] In one sense, *Humphry Clinker* is a satiric revue of many fiction trends since the 1740s: in addition to the epistolary romance (it ends with not one, not two, but with *three* weddings), it has plot points in common with *Tom Jones* and *Clarissa*, features Welsh provincials gobsmacked by the big city, mocks Methodists, and of course exemplifies the road romance that Smollett cut his teeth on 23 years earlier. At the same time, it is highly innovative: the novel is named after a minor character who doesn’t appear until a quarter of the way through the novel, and who remains a minor, ludicrous figure; the novel mixes in so many real characters of the time that a reader in 1771 could be excused for assuming that *The Expedition of Humphry Clinker* was a sequel to Smollett’s epistolary *Travels through France and Italy* (1766), which reads like it was written by Matthew Bramble in one of his fouler moods; and, last and least, it’s the first novel to describe the game of golf.

The current state of literature is only one of the many topics Smollett takes on in *Humphry Clinker*. Smollett wrote it on the heels of compiling *The Present State of All Nations* (1768–69), and the novel functions as his state-of-the-union assessment of English and Scottish politics, religion, architecture, medicine, finance, urban growth, nationalism, fashion, conspicuous consumption, horticulture, folk beliefs and superstitions, diet, trade policies, and anything else Smollett wanted to vent about. It’s a very pessimistic assessment (though Scotland comes off better than England), and even though the novel cautions us to take this as only one man’s

subjective opinion, the breadth of observation and depth of experience behind those observations encourage us to take it as a fairly reliable evaluation. Admittedly, it's a male viewpoint: Matthew (Smollett's mouthpiece) writes over a third of the letters, and another third are written by Jeremy, who comes around to his uncle's way of thinking. (The women who write the remaining third—or "turd," as Winifred spells the word—are personal, unconcerned with larger social issues.) At any rate, no other novel gives a better sense of what it was like to be alive in the 1760s in England—what it smelled like, what people ate and drank, how they ran a farm or a household, how they traveled, how they talked, how they conducted politics, what the cities and countryside looked like from Wales east to London up to Scotland and back—nor offers such a colorful cross-section of society, from aristocrats to commoners, the college-educated to the barely literate, Brits, Scots, Welsh, Irish, Protestants, Catholics, Scotch Presbyterians, Methodists, fathers and sons, brothers and sisters, masters and servants, the happily married and desperately single: a veritable panorama of English life in the early days of the reign of King George III. This is the novel Smollett was born to write, but it was his last hurrah: he died three months after its publication.

I don't have the space to pursue some even more outlandish road romances published during this period, such as *The Travels of Hildebrand Bowman* (1778) attributed to a sailor named John Elliott (1759–1834), in which Brown sails to New Zealand, is separated from his crew, and wanders through several remote nations near Australia à la *Gulliver's Travels*.[313] A more obvious imitation of Swift's novel is the anonymous *Modern Gulliver's Travels* (1796), a poetry-rich satire in which a resident of Blefuscu claiming to be Gulliver's son (by a Blefuscuan nun) recounts what's been happening on the nearby island of Lilliput ever since Gulliver escaped. Both can be found in volume 4 of Claeys's *Modern British Utopias*, which also includes an extraterrestrial road romance by William Thompson (1746–1817) entitled *The Man in the Moon; or, Travels into the Lunar Regions* (1783), an admiring allegorical portrait of Whig politician Charles James Fox. It reminds me that poet William Blake (1757–1827) began a truly lunatic novel called *An Island in the Moon* (1784).[314] But he left it unfinished, which is a good excuse to leave it and these other travel

novels to return to Earth for a sensitive genre I've been putting off for too long.

THE SENTIMENTAL NOVEL

A few months before *Humphry Clinker* was published, there appeared the locus classicus of the sentimental novel, *The Man of Feeling* by Smollett's fellow Scot Henry Mackenzie (1745–1831). As his title indicates, the novel of sentiment—aka the novel of sensibility—privileged feelings over actions, emotional response over rational analysis, and friendship over passion. Its sexless protagonists were more sensitive than most to nature's beauty, works of art, and poignant moments, and were meant to elicit (if not exploit) the reader's sympathy and compassion. It's important to note that back then the word *sentimental* did not mean what it does today: it's not mawkish nostalgia, but rather an enlightened empathy involving thought as well as emotion, sense *and* sensibility, though it quickly degenerated into kitschy emotionalism, a taste for the pathetic rather than for the empathetic. Formally, they tend to be first-person narratives, simulating direct expressions of sentiment without authorial mediation (though there is sometimes a frame supplied by a sympathetic "editor").[315] We've already seen several partial examples, specifically those novels in which bad things happen to good people, such as Fielding's *David Simple* and Sheridan's *Sidney Bidulph*. In fact, the latter displays the sentimentalist in full bloom when Sidney gushes to a correspondent, "Oh, Cecilia! how exquisite are the pleasures and pains that those of too nice feelings are liable to! You, whose sensibility is as strong as mine, know this. From what trifles do minds of such a turn derive both joy and grief!" (283). Henry Brooke's *Fool of Quality* is another example, which, in addition to pathetic tales of virtuous distress relieved by benevolence, features a member of the genre's target audience, the previously quoted lady who admits "I love to weep! I joy to grieve! It is my happiness, my delight, to have my heart broken in pieces" (3:49). Perhaps the best illustration of sensibility can be found in Wollstonecraft's *Mary*, after the protagonist witnesses the heartwarming results of her charitable acts:

> Mary's tears flowed not only from sympathy, but a complication of feelings and recollections; the affections which bound her to her fellow creatures began to play, and reanimated nature. She observed the change in herself, tried to account for it, and wrote with her pencil a rhapsody on sensibility.
>
> "Sensibility is the most exquisite feeling of which the human soul is susceptible: when it pervades us, we feel happy; and could it last unmixed, we might form some conjecture of the bliss of those paradisaical days when the obedient passions were under the dominion of reason, and the impulses of the heart did not need correction.
>
> "It is this quickness, this delicacy of feeling, which enables us to relish the sublime touches of the poet and the painter; it is this which expands the soul, gives an enthusiastic greatness, mixed with tenderness, when we view the magnificent objects of nature, or hear of a good action. The same effect we experience in the spring, when we hail the returning sun, and the consequent renovation of nature; when the flowers unfold themselves and exhale their sweets, and the voice of music is heard in the land. Softened by tenderness, the soul is disposed to be virtuous. Is any sensual gratification to be compared to that of feeling the eyes moistened after having comforted the unfortunate?" (chap. 24)

Sterne answered that question with a wink in *A Sentimental Journey*, which both contributes to and complicates the genre, as do *Tristram Shandy*—which contains several sentimental episodes—and foreign examples like Rousseau's *Julie* and Goethe's *Werther*.

Like Sterne's novella, *The Vicar of Wakefield* (1766) by Oliver Goldsmith (1730–74) is a famous but dodgy example of the genre. Spotting the sentimental trend early on, the impecunious Irishman wrote the short novel in 1762 because he needed the money. (Samuel Johnson, who acted as his agent, told Boswell the publisher who bought it sat on it for four years until Goldsmith was better known.) The story is clearly calculated to tug on the heartstrings: Rev. Charles Primrose calmly explains how he lost his cozy post at Wakefield and had to take a poorly paid curacy in a dreary village 70 miles away, where his family makes the best of their rural life—lots of sitting around the fireside sharing stories and songs, and drinking homemade gooseberry wine—until an escalating series of disasters plague

the family: first one, then the other teenage daughter is abducted; his eldest son loses his girlfriend and wanders aimlessly through England and Europe like a Smollett character; the family home is burned to the ground; and Rev. Primrose is bankrupted and thrown in prison, where he receives reports that his eldest daughter has died and his son has been beaten and arrested. At that low point, an eccentric rich aristocrat who has been following their fortunes in disguise reveals himself and makes everything OK. Despite its echoes of the book of Job, it's a corny story with a confused chronology and way too many convenient coincidences, more like a fairy tale than a novel.

To the superficial reader, *The Vicar of Wakefield* is sentimental in both the 18th-century sense—the novel is ripe with sympathy, feelings, and benevolence—and in the modern, nostalgic sense of evoking a simpler time of strong family values and rural joys. For those readers, the novel is comfortingly antiintellectual: each time book-learning is displayed, it turns out to be part of a scam. But to the sophisticated reader, there's something wrong with this picture. Rev. Primrose represents an ideal Christian, but he's easily and repeatedly duped throughout the novel: his financial naïveté is responsible for his expulsion from Edenic Wakefield, along with his naïve commitment to narrow religious dogmas that cost him his job and even endanger others: because his daughter swore an oath to her abductor, he tells her not to reveal his identity "even though it may benefit the public," and he rejoices to learn they were secretly married, content to see his daughter shackled to her rapist. By the end of the novel, he's become something of a joke, as when he buzzkills everyone's excitement on their wedding day: "I told them of the grave, becoming and sublime deportment they should assume upon this mystical occasion, and read them two homilies and a thesis of my own composition in order to prepare them" (chap. 32). The novel appears to be more of a satire of sentiment than a celebration of it, especially since Goldsmith possessed a subtle, deadpan sense of humor that often went over the heads of his auditors.[316] When Rev. Primrose's eventual benefactor is first described, his "sensibility" is compared to a medical condition: "Physicians tells us of a disorder in which the whole body is so exquisitely sensible that the slightest touch gives pain: what some have thus suffered in their persons, this gentleman felt in his mind. The slightest distress, whether real or fictitious, touched him to the

quick, and his soul laboured under a sickly sensibility of the miseries of others" (3). Later, a girl who sheds a tear at a sad story is said to be "possessed of too much sensibility" (19).

In a novel rife with deceptions and disguises, it shouldn't surprise us that *The Vicar of Wakefield* is not what it appears to be. The warm, fuzzy tale has a rigorously mathematical structure—32 chapters, with the abduction of the daughter occurring exactly in the middle, with poetic statements of the theme in chapters 8 and 24—and virtually every plot development is artificially contrived: in the introduction to the Oxford edition I've been quoting, Robert L. Mack notes, "Almost every narrative episode in the Vicar's account took its cue from or found its model not in lived human experience or behavior, but had been drawn straight from the work of a contemporary or immediate predecessor" (xxiv). The novel is not heartfelt but brainy; as Mack suggests elsewhere, "it is as if [Goldsmith] has caught all the mechanism of the sentimental novel without the emotional basis for which it is constructed."[317] This is not a criticism but a testimony to Goldsmith's artistry. For generations *The Vicar of Wakefield* was read as a sentimental paean to homespun values and what Rev. Primrose calls "those harmless delusions that tend to make us more happy" (3). But today it reads like an exposé of the inadequacy of such values, and even the danger of those delusions, when trying to cope with living in the real world.

Henry Mackenzie's *Man of Feeling* (1771) is one of the most peculiar novels of the 18th century, fascinating because of its form rather than its content. The story is negligible (and very reminiscent of Fielding's *David Simple*): uncertain how to succeed in the world, a shy, overly sensitive young man named Harley is encouraged to go to London to obtain the lease to some land next to his modest estate; meets and listens to the sob stories of various people (a beggar, a prostitute, a madwoman in Bedlam); is fleeced by some conmen; fails to attain the lease and returns home, where he meets an old soldier with an even sadder sob story; contracts an illness from tending to the sick soldier, compounded by a broken heart after he hears a false report that his unrequited love is getting married; and then dies happily after she tells him on his deathbed that she has always loved him, a man too sensitive to survive in this harsh, corrupt world.

Although the story is pure 18th-century schmaltz, the form is surprisingly avant-garde. The novel consists of fragments, the remaining remnants of a much longer manuscript that a fat, insensitive curate has been using for wadding paper for his hunting rifle. Consequently, it begins with chapters 11–14 (which may have given Hamilton the idea to begin *Memoirs of Modern Philosophers* with chapter 5), then jumps to chapters 19–21 (with further gaps within 21), then 25–29 followed by an unplaced fragment, and so on until the concluding chapter. Hence, only 20 of the manuscript's original 57 chapters are present, along with three fragments from the others. The story is preceded by an introduction by an unnamed editor who informs us that the manuscript was written by a sympathetic friend of Harley's whom the curate describes as "a grave, oddish kind of man" called "The Ghost" by countryfolk (real name Charles). But since Charles narrates scenes at which he was not present, its veracity is in question. Thus the fragmentary manuscript, its uncertain status as an accurate memoir, and the three-ply frame around it all complicate *The Man of Feeling*, for which the manuscript's editor apologizes at the end of chapter 40:

> [At this place had the greatest depredations of the curate begun. There were so very few connected passages of the subsequent chapters remaining that even the partiality of an editor could not offer them to the public. I discovered, from some scattered sentences, that they were of much the same tenor with the preceding: recitals of little adventures in which the disposition of a man, sensible to judge and still more warm to feel, had room to unfold themselves. Some instruction, and some example, I make no doubt they contained; but it is likely that many of those, whom chance has led to a perusal of what I have already presented, may have read it with little pleasure, and will feel no disappointment from the want of those parts which I have been unable to procure: to such as may have expected the intricacies of a novel, a few incidents in a life undistinguished, except by some features of the heart, cannot have afforded much entertainment.]

Mackenzie has gutted the 18th-century novel of all its stuffing and connective tissue to present only concentrated scenes of sentimentalism, which is why the novel was so popular (pure shots of an uncut drug for

sentimentalism addicts) and which is why the novel is only a quarter of the length of the 400-page *David Simple*. "Since feeling is first/who pays any attention/to the syntax of things," E. E. Cummings asks, "syntax" in this case being the linear form and background material of a conventional novel. "I would have it as different from the entanglement of a novel as can be," Mackenzie wrote in a letter while at work on *The Man of Feeling*, and as a result it is fragmentary, impressionistic, expressionistic, more like a postmodern novel than a premodern one. Though sketchily presented, Harley is reminiscent of the weepy heroes of medieval Japanese novels as well as the eccentric wanderers and aesthetes of 19th-century poetry and fiction. The exaggerated sentimentality of *The Man of Feeling* is dated, but its daring experiments with form and character make it timeless.

Publishers noted the success of *The Man of Feeling* and were quick to cash in on the trend: in 1774, an abridged edition of Sarah Scott's *Sir George Ellison* was issued under the title *The Man of Real Sensibility*, with an epigraph from *A Sentimental Journey*. Soon the shelves of circulating libraries were groaning with precious additions to the genre, though most are derivative and cliché-ridden. "Between 1770 and 1780 appeared *The Assignation, a Sentimental Novel*; *The Tears of Sensibility*; *The Sentimental Spy*; *The Embarrassed Lovers*; *The Delicate Objection, or Sentimental Scruples*; and *Travels for the Heart*," Shepperson records. "Between 1780 and 1790 appeared *Distressed Virtue*; *The Effusions of Love*; *Female Sensibility*; *The Sentimental Deceiver*; *Sentimental Memoirs*; *The Favourites of Felicity*; *The Errors of Innocence*; *The Victim of Fancy*;[318] *Excessive Sensibility*; *The Curse of Sentiment*;[319] *The Illusions of Sentiment*" (84). This fad, like all literary fads, soon fell out of favor; Shepperson tells of how a Scotch lady wept over *The Man of Feeling* at age 14 shortly after it came out, but 50 years later "read it aloud to a group of friends, and how instead of weeping they laughed, and how she herself was unable to restrain her mirth" (83). The only sentimental novels still worth reading—*A Sentimental Journey*, *The Vicar of Wakefield*, *The Man of Feeling*—are those that problematize the popular genre, and whose canny authors may have been laughing up their sleeves at their sensitive readers.

THE GOTHIC NOVEL

On the day before Christmas 1764, a small novel appeared that had a big impact on fiction. *The Castle of Otranto* claimed on its title page to be a translation by William Marshal of an Italian story written by Onuphrio Muralto in the Middle Ages and published in Naples in 1529. When the novel was reprinted five months later—the subtitle significantly changed from "A Story" to "A Gothic Story"—it was revealed to be the invention of Horace Walpole (1717–97), the rich, aesthetic son of the hated former prime minister. In his preface to that second edition, Walpole stated that the novel was "an attempt to blend the two kinds of romance, the ancient and the modern" and thus to breed "a new species of romance"[320]—a phrase that self-consciously echoes the "new species of writing" created by Richardson and Fielding a generation earlier. By "ancient" Walpole meant the late medieval period, which appealed to those disenchanted with rational, Enlightenment thinking, and who used the term "Gothic" to describe its appeal. As David Punter puts it in *The Literature of Terror*, "Gothic stood for the old-fashioned as opposed to the modern; the barbaric as opposed to the civilised; crudity as opposed to elegance; old English barons as opposed to the cosmopolitan gentry; . . . Gothic was the archaic, the pagan, that which was prior to, or was opposed to, or resisted the establishment of civilised values and a well-regulated society" (5). Walpole preferred the Gothic approach to literature over the modern because "In the former, all was imagination and improbability," while in the latter "the great resources of fancy have been damned up by strict adherence to common life" (7).

"Desirous of leaving the powers of fancy at liberty to expatiate through boundless realms of invention," he goes on to say, "and thence of creating more interesting situations," Walpole begins his novel with a gigantic helmet falling out of nowhere and crushing to death the 15-year-old son of Prince Manfred of Otranto, who had hoped to marry him to an 18-year-old virgin named Isabella in order to tighten his loose claim to the principality his grandfather acquired through poisoning the rightful ruler and forging a will. Over the next three days, Manfred tries to put a new plan in place—divorcing his sterile wife and marrying Isabella himself—while appeasing a visiting combative knight by offering his dutiful daughter Matilda to him. Meanwhile, Manfred is being harassed by a priest from the nearby

monastery and by a young stranger named Theodore who has fallen for Matilda, and who happens to be the son of the priest and the legitimate heir to the principality of Otranto. If that were not enough, the increasingly frenzied Manfred is spooked by apparitions, including a giant, a painting that comes to life, and a talking skeleton. Convinced that Theodore is wooing Isabella in a dark church, Manfred goes there and accidentally stabs his daughter Matilda to death; overwhelmed with guilt, he confesses the illegitimacy of his claim to the throne and, after relinquishing it to Theodore, retires to the monastery. Theodore reluctantly marries Isabella, who had become Matilda's friend, because "he could know no happiness but in the society of one with whom he could forever indulge the melancholy that had taken possession of his soul" (102).

Walpole set the stage for later Gothic novels by introducing all the standard props and tropes: an old castle, a nearby monastery (both connected by a spooky subterranean passage), supernatural occurrences, medieval pageantry, superstitious Catholicism, portentous weather, terrifying sounds, dark secrets, repressed sexuality, an "ancient prophecy," and so on. He established the standard personae dramatis: a tyrannical father, a submissive wife, frightened virgins, priests and nuns, the handsome outsider (usually a nobleman dressed as a peasant), knights and their retainers, and (for comic relief) garrulous servants. And he gave the Gothic its specialized vocabulary, words and phrases like *horror*, *horrid*, *tremendous*, "*exquisite villainy*," *torture*, *ominous*, "*pleasing melancholy*," *terror*, *phrenzy*, *monster*, "*haunted by evil spirits*," "*the powers of darkness*," "*dreadful spectre*," etc.— all clichés now, but startling in 1764, evoking recent "graveyard poetry" and the Jacobean drama of a century and a half earlier. (In fact, *The Castle of Otranto* has much more in common with Elizabethan plays—specially Shakespeare's, which are quoted often—than with medieval romances.) Walpole doesn't explain away the supernatural occurrences, leaving it to the reader to decide whether they are metaphoric manifestations of psychological states or demonstrations of "the powers of fancy at liberty." In any case, Walpole created the template used by countless later novelists, dramatists, and filmmakers; as Mack writes in his introduction to the Everyman edition (which is recommended because it includes Walpole's bizarre *Hieroglyphic Tales* [1785]), "The fundamental thematic concerns of the story—the manner in which the past impinges

upon the present, the brutal and violent connection between sexuality and power, and the overwhelming conviction that the truth will finally be brought to light— are, again, those which to a large degree are at the centre of the gothic to this very day" (xvii–xviii).[321]

Given the popularity of *The Castle of Otranto*, it is surprising that no one thought of imitating it until a generation later. In 1777, Clara Reeve (1729–1807) published a novel entitled *The Champion of Virtue: A Gothic Story*, but better known by its 1778 reprint title, *The Old English Baron*. Reeve admits upfront that her slim novel "is the literary offspring of *The Castle of Otranto*, written upon the same plan, with a design to unite the most attractive and interesting circumstances of the ancient romance and modern novel. . ." (2). But hers is weak tea compared to Walpole's strong mead, a blandly written story of how a young man raised as a peasant discovers he's a nobleman and claims his rightful place. Reeve felt the supernatural events in *Otranto* "excite laughter" rather than terror, so she dials them down to a premonitory dream, a ghost or two, and the haunted wing of a castle; the result is merely a novel set in the 1420s, less a Gothic than a historical novel, a genre that was in development at this time.[322] Walpole's *Otranto* may be rather stilted, but it has an intensity that is lacking in Reeve's boring novel, and not surprisingly Walpole dismissed it, telling a friend that *The Old English Baron* was "so probable that any trial for murder at the Old Bailey would make a more interesting story" (Punter, 48).

Much more impressive and ambitious is *The Recess; or, A Tale of Other Times* (1783–85) by dramatist Sophia Lee (1750–1824). A well-researched dramatization of political machinations during the reigns of Elizabeth I and James I, *The Recess* is a considerably more detailed historical novel than Reeve's, while retaining the tension and malevolent atmosphere of Walpole's novella. The dreaded tyrant here is Elizabeth I, whose persecution of Mary, Queen of Scots, extends to her two (fictitious) daughters, Matilda and Ellinore, who spend most of the novel confined in various dungeons, prisons, and Gothic monasteries (one of which contains the hidden room that gives the novel its title). There are instruments of torture, bandits, abductions, threats of rape, bad weather, and in Ellinore's case, "total insanity": dressed in black, she appears before a frenzied Queen Elizabeth, who thought she was dead and hence regards her as a "ghastly

spectre" (266). Even pregnancy is swathed in Gothic gloom: when Matilda realizes she's pregnant, she tells the fetus "throbs of terror were thy first symptoms of existence," and when she is born, the girl seems "to bewail her unknown calamity" (91, 132), as though sensing that she too is doomed to be a persecuted maiden in a Gothic novel. (When she grows up, her intended dies, she is imprisoned with her mother, and dies of poison, as though fulfilling a family curse.) The Gothic mood is maintained by the rich, metaphoric language, which is much more like Walpole's than Reeve's: "The radiant sun of love seemed to dip into a sea of blood, and sink there forever" (117). Matilda describes Greenwich Palace on the Thames (Queen Elizabeth's birthplace) thus: "The tide in silence laved the walls of a deserted palace, which verging to decay like its past possessors, seemed but a gaudy mausoleum" (152). Describing a new bout of madness, Ellinore writes, "It brought on another Greenland winter's night, which lasted many lingering months" (186).

To the Gothic and historical modes, Lee adds elements of the sentimental novel—she wants to make our eyes weep rather than our flesh creep—illustrating the Gothic's tendency to feed on other genres like a parasite—or as Maggie Kilgour more aptly puts it, "The form is thus itself a Frankenstein's monster, assembled out of the bits and pieces of the past" (4). The structure of *The Recess* is interesting, possibly unique in 18th-century epistolary fiction. The narrative is a 320-page memoir written by Matilda at the end of her calamitous life for a French ambassador's daughter, who helped the dejected Englishwoman when she moved to France to retire. But enclosed within it is a 115-page narrative written by Ellinore, who gives her side of the story. (They had a difference of opinion over Elizabeth's courtiers: Matilda fell for and married the Earl of Leicester, while Ellinore preferred the Earl of Essex.) More adventurous than timid Matilda—who feels "I was born for obedience" and considers herself "a voluntary victim" (63, 90—much like her namesake in *Otranto*), Ellinore gradually cracks up, replicated visually as her narrative breaks up into fragments and short letters. When Matilda finishes reading this manuscript, she voices the response Lee hoped to elicit from her readers: "[I] remained the statue of despair, every sense seeming riveted on the manuscript I held" (269). The two accounts contradict rather than complement each other, and there's no authorial intervention to indicate whose account is more accurate.

Nor is there any restoration of order, as in Walpole's and Reeve's novels—King James is no better than Queen Elizabeth in the narrator's opinion—which makes Lee's Gothic even grimmer than theirs.

Though the Scottish physician John Moore (1729–1802) did not set out to write a Gothic novel, his once-popular *Zeluco* (1789) is often grouped with them (a gloom of Gothics?) because it contains a flagrant example of the genre's stock villain: the egotistic Italian tyrant. Indulged by his mother, Zeluco displays "strong indications of a vicious disposition" (as the first chapter's subtitle announces) as early as age 10, when he crushes his pet sparrow to death because "it did not perform certain tricks which he had taught it to his satisfaction." Zeluco grows up to be a vain, selfish egomaniac: he impregnates/abandons a woman while burning through his inheritance; goes off to Cuba and becomes a vicious slaveholder; makes a fortune there, returns to Naples, and marries a decent young woman named Laura for her body, tires of it, and begins an affair with a Sicilian schemer named Nerina, who convinces him that Zeluco's child by Laura is illegitimate. In a fit of rage, he snatches the child from Laura's arms and strangles it, "occasioned" (the author needlessly reminds us) "by the propensity he betrayed in his infancy" when he, "in a fit of groundless passion, squeezed his sparrow to death" (chap. 89). To the reader's satisfaction, Zeluco is fatally stabbed in the stomach by a rival after Zeluco catches him in bed with Nerina, and Laura makes a more satisfactory second marriage, moving away from sensuous, Catholic Italy to rational, Protestant Germany. There are no supernatural scenes in *Zeluco*—as the worldly author assures us, Zuluco's heartless egotism is all too common—but the vain, vengeful title character and the Italian setting influenced later Gothic novelists, as well as Lord Byron, who inexplicably described his *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* as "a poetical *Zeluco*." (Harold is much nobler than the asshole Zeluco.) Dr. Moore's sardonic novel is closer in form and substance to the early novels of Smollett—a friend and distant cousin—especially *Ferdinand Count Fathom*, another portrait of a miscreant with some Gothic elements.

Born the year *The Castle of Otranto* was published, Ann Radcliffe (1764–1823) is the one who transformed the Gothic novel from a minor literary genre into a popular commercial one. She did so by grafting on to Frankenstein's monster two more modes: the romance and the travelogue.

All of her novels are conventional romances dressed up for Halloween, and follow the standard romance formula: a goody-goody heroine (usually an orphan, but with money and looks) is prevented from marrying the man she admires (usually of noble birth, but with some temporary ignoble stain) by a tyrant of some sort. After the usual obstacles, the tyrant is overcome and the hero and heroine reclaim their inheritances and marry. As one of her modern editors observes, her works "are basically novels of sensibility with heroes and heroines straight out of the tradition of Richardson, Prévost, and especially Rousseau."[323] What Radcliffe did is to blow up these conventional story-lines to nightmarish proportions by use of Gothic machinery and *apparent* supernaturalism—always explained away as manmade contrivances or misinterpreted actions—and cushion them in pages of lush nature description. It's a formula that made her rich and inspired a legion of imitators. Influenced not by Walpole but by his imitators (especially Reeve and Lee), Radcliffe set her first novel, *The Castles of Athlin and Dunbayne* (1789), in Scotland near the end of the 16th century. Seventeen-year-old Mary is the heroine of this tale of two feuding clans, and displays the Radcliffean heroine's tendency to faint a lot and retain her virginity through several abductions by immoral men. Gothic castles with dungeons, damp crypts, and subterranean passages provide the atmosphere, but Radcliffe explains away any suspiciously paranormal occurrences, a bait-and-switch tactic that she uses in all her novels. This was followed by *The Sicilian Romance* (1791), which is a little better and a little longer, as is *The Romance of the Forest* (1792), set in a ruined abbey in France.

On the strength of these, Radcliffe was offered the unprecedented sum of £500 (at a time when many novelists were lucky to get £10) for her fourth and longest novel, *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794). It begins with a l-e-i-s-u-r-e-l-y account of a sightseeing trip through southern France undertaken in 1584 by Emily St. Aubin and her ailing father, who soon dies and leaves her in the hands of an odious aunt (who needs a huge falling helmet to crush her to death). The aunt makes a bad marriage with a visiting Italian count named Montoni, who takes them back to Venice and then to his castle at Udolpho in northern Italy, forcing Emily to abandon her beloved, a local aristocrat named Valancourt. Rumors of the mysterious death of the castle's

previous owner, along with spooky shenanigans, drive Emily to distraction, causing the narrator to tut-tut: "It was lamentable that her excellent understanding should have yielded, even for a moment, to the reveries of superstition, or rather to those starts of imagination which deceive the senses into what can be called nothing less than momentary madness" (1.10). After Emily's aunt dies, Montoni turns his horrid attention to her—nothing sexual; he just wants the property she has now inherited—and eventually Emily is able to escape from Udolpho with the help of her servants. She returns to France only to confront further mysteries and paranormal activity in a haunted château, and where she learns that, while she was away, Valancourt went on a wild spree in Paris (cf. Saint Preux in *Julie*). Her sense of decorum and propriety forces her to break off their engagement, to the exasperation of her old nurse: "Dear dear! to see how some people fling away their happiness, and then cry and lament about it, just as if it was not their own doing, and as if there was more pleasure in wailing and weeping then in being at peace" (4.14)—which may register Radcliffe's impatience with the sentimental genre that she otherwise adapts. Predictably, all mysteries are cleared up, Valancourt's reputation is restored, and they marry and move back into her beloved father's home.

By literary standards, *Udolpho* is circulating-library stuff, aimed at readers like Polly Honeycombe. It is filled with anachronisms, characters straight out of Central Casting, bathetic poetry, and bland, over-punctuated prose: leaving Venice en route to Udolpho, "Emily gave a last look to that splendid city, but her mind was then occupied by considering the probable events, that awaited her, in the scenes, to which she was removing, and with conjectures, concerning the motive of this sudden journey" (2.5).[324] Radcliffe's thick descriptions of scenery have some value as obvious metaphors for Emily's psychic landscapes—picturesque and uplifting during her idyllic days with her father, foreboding and sublime during her nights in Udolpho—but they are too repetitious and unoriginal; Radcliffe worked them up from travel books, landscape paintings, and from Edmund Burke's theory of the "sublime," which argues that terrifying, oppressive sights are pleasurable if viewed from a distance with no real danger involved. That's one drawback to the novel: despite some suspenseful moments, the reader knows that there's no real danger involved, that

nothing horrible will actually happen to our beautiful heroine. By the end of the novel, Emily should have learned that you can't trust anyone over 30—every adult has withheld secrets from her, including her beloved father—but she remains "a voluntary victim" (like Lee's Matilda) of class expectations regarding female decorum and propriety. *The Mysteries of Udolpho* is a competent commercial novel, but nothing more; midway through, Emily self-consciously compares her present life to "one of those frightful fictions in which the wild genius of the poets sometimes delighted" (2.9), but "wild genius" is precisely what's missing in this workmanlike performance.

That quality electrifies the most notorious Gothic thriller of the 1790s, *The Monk* (1796) by the young Matthew Gregory Lewis (1775–1818). As a teenager he began a Gothic novel inspired by *The Castle of Otranto*, but it was Radcliffe's *Udolpho* that caused him to revise and complete it. Set in Madrid in maybe the 17th century and narrated in what one character calls "a tone of burlesqued gravity" (2.1), *The Monk* is an olla podrida of Gothic elements: creepy monks and nuns, dungeons filled with rotting corpses, scary legends, bandits, Catholic superstitions, ghost stories, erotic dreams, Satanic invocations, bells at midnight, blasphemy, occultism, voyeurism, homosexuality, transvestism, matricide, and incest, climaxing in the torching of a convent, mob violence, and appearances by Lucifer himself. Unlike Radcliffe, Lewis doesn't explain away the supernatural but revels in it, and where she hints at horrors, he shoves them in our faces. The protagonist is a 30-year-old monk named Ambrosio who, as a result of a twisted religious upbringing at the hands of other monks, has become vainglorious about his religiosity and fame. (He's Madrid's most popular priest.) He is tempted off his self-righteous perch by a cowled young novice named Rosario, who reveals himself to be a woman named Matilda (in homage to Walpole's heroine) and then seduces him. Lewis adds a blasphemous touch by revealing later that she posed for the painting of the Catholic goddess Mary in his cell that Ambrosio ogles with a teenager's lust. After a few sessions of R-rated sex—more explicitly narrated than in any mainstream novel since *Fanny Hill*—Ambrosio tires of her and sets his sights on a 15-year-old named Antonia (who also belongs to a subplot concerning two young Spanish aristocrats). Ambrosio's attempted rapes fail, so he gives her a sleeping potion borrowed from *Romeo and Juliet*, has his way with her in a dungeon, and then murders her when he fears

detection. Captured and tortured by officers of the Inquisition, he sells his soul to Lucifer in exchange for freedom, but Old Nick reneges, takes him to a mountainous region like that surrounding Udolpho, and drops him from the sky to his death.

Where Radcliffe embroidered the sentimental novel onto the Gothic pattern, the well-read Lewis drew upon German terror-novels, the legends of Faustus and the Wandering Jew, European folklore, the Garden of Eden myth, and possibly Sade's *Justine*.[325] Where she teases about horrors, he displays them in horrific detail, and where she lazily relies on flat character-types, Lewis molded Ambrosio into a well-rounded character with psychological depths and complicated attitudes toward religion, sex, and power. Matilda too is a fascinating character, a bold groupie who is so devoted to Ambrosio that she assists him with his seduction of Antonia. Their perverse, codependent relationship sounds quite modern, as does her hedonistic attitude toward life; she is *such* a refreshing change from the priggish virgins who fret and faint their way through most novels of the period. (True, Matilda is a crossdressing Satanist, but nobody's perfect.) *The Monk* is a deliberately garish, over-the-top performance by a 20-year-old intent on épatering le bourgeois; like *The Rocky Horror Picture Show*, it provides "terrible thrills" with cheeky aplomb and crude vitality. But it fulfills a more serious function as well: like *The Castle of Otranto* and Beckford's *Vathek* (sometimes categorized as a Gothic), *The Monk* successfully challenges the hegemony of the post-1740s realistic novel and demonstrates that even the most absurdly supernatural novel can vie with the most realistic when it comes to psychological insights, cultural criticism, and the relationship between the individual and the community.

Mother Radcliffe (as Keats later called her) was disgusted by *The Monk* and outraged to learn that her *Udolpho* inspired it; not about to be upstaged by a punk kid, she responded with her own novel about a corrupt monk: *The Italian* (1797), her last and arguably best Gothic thriller. She frames it as a found manuscript to ease her English readers into the pool of Italian depravity; first she relates how some English travelers visit a church in Naples in 1764, are shocked to learn the church is harboring a known murderer, and are handed a manuscript written a few years earlier about an incident that occurred at the same church. Then Radcliffe destroys the

illusion by affixing an epigraph to the first chapter than comes from a 1768 play (Walpole's *Mysterious Mother*), typical of her indifference to anachronisms. The story is also typical: a young man (Vivaldi) falls in love-at-first-sight with a modest virgin (Ellena), who is of course an orphan "tremblingly jealous of propriety" living with a stern aunt; Vivaldi's parents oppose their marriage because her family is unknown, and thus arrange to disappear the girl, but after the typical period of trials and tribulations, the young innocents are reunited and marry. Radcliffe darkens this boilerplate romance by adding an evil monk (Schedoni) who hopes to be rewarded with "a high benefice" by Vivaldi's mother for murdering Ellena, which he is on the verge of doing when he discovers she may be his daughter. Looking like "a gaunt tiger" with a "vulture eye," Father Schedoni is a more complex villain than Ambrosio or *Udolpho*'s Montoni; they were driven by simple lust and greed, respectively, whereas he is a twisted knot of ambition, anger, pride, melancholy, and remorse. Also, the malevolence of the adult world is more pronounced than in *Udolpho*: nearly every authority figure resorts to subterfuge, withholds secrets, and threatens the lives and happiness of the young protagonists. Near the end, both Schedoni and Vivaldi are arrested by officers of the Inquisition—nobody expects the *Italian* Inquisition, for it had been inactive in Italy for a century—and during a lengthier, blander version of Lewis's trial scene, Schedoni confesses his crimes and poisons himself.

The Italian is a tauter work than *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, with fewer nature descriptions, and so few supernatural elements that it barely qualifies as a Gothic. In fact, Radcliffe often seems to express doubts about the genre she popularized (especially after seeing what Lewis did with it); repudiating the supernaturalism of *The Monk* (and perhaps that of her earlier novels), Radcliffe has Schedoni chastise Vivaldi at the end for "a susceptibility which renders you especially liable to superstition," going on perhaps to indict fans of Gothic fiction as well: "what ardent imagination ever was contented to trust to plain reasoning, or to the evidence of the senses? It may not willingly confine itself to the dull truths of this earth, but, eager to expand its faculties, to fill its capacity, and to experience its own particular delights, soars after new wonders into a world of its own" (3.11). Yet this is the very reason that people read novels like hers; if contented with "the dull truths of this earth," they would read nonfiction, or read nothing at all. On

several occasions an impatient character orders another to "Be brief" when giving a detailed, circumambulatory account of something, and yet that's the very manner Radcliffe uses, or feels compelled to use by her genre, teasing out each scene with pages of suspense. During a moment of self-doubt (and self-consciousness on Radcliffe's part?), Ellena seems to critique the virtuous virgin stereotype of romantic fiction that she exemplifies: "Her very virtues, now that they were carried to excess, seemed to her to border upon vices; her sense of dignity appeared to be narrow pride; her delicacy weakness; her moderated affection cold ingratitude; and her circumspection little less than prudence degenerated into meanness" (2.5).[326] Near the end, with one revelation following another, Ellena exclaims, "When will these discoveries end!" (3.9), another self-conscious acknowledgment of the Gothic genre's clichéd modus operandi. Monk Lewis (as he came to be known) pushed the envelope of the Gothic novel; Mother Radcliffe remains inside the envelope, but grumbles about it. Perhaps for this reason—and because she no longer needed the money (she banked £600 for *The Italian*)—she wrote no further Gothic romances.

The genre had been taken over by hacks by this time, who continued to feed the reading public's tacky taste for "horrid" Gothic thrillers.[327] But the better examples of the genre resonated with better readers and writers, beginning with the Romantics and continuing to this day. What may have seemed like the most ephemeral genre of the 18th century has become one of the most enduring, preying upon our sense of the uncanny, our suspicions about conspiracies and malevolent power structures, and our sensual enjoyment of suspense as the young and innocent fend off the old and evil.

POLITICAL NOVELS

In his "Essay on Novels," the Marquis de Sade reports that the Gothic novel "was the necessary offspring of the revolutionary upheaval which affected the whole of Europe. . . . There was hardly a soul alive who did not experience more adversity in four or five years than the most famous novelist in all literature could have invented in a hundred. Writers therefore had to look to hell for help in composing their alluring novels, and project what everyone already knew into the realm of fantasy . . ." (13–14). But a

small number of novelists during the 1790s preferred to stay in the realm of reality and confront revolutionary upheaval directly rather than metaphorically. Of course political concerns had been in the background of many English novels from Wroth's *Urania* onward, but after the American Revolution and the early events of the French Revolution, some English novelists pushed their political concerns to the foreground as they pondered the possibility that England might be next in line for a revolution—an idea that thrilled some and terrified others.[328]

One can literally see the genre shifting in that direction in the third novel by Charlotte Smith (1749–1804). Needing money after leaving her dissolute husband, Smith first wrote two romance novels with some Gothic touches —*Emmeline, the Orphan of the Castle* (1788) and *Ethelinde; or, The Recluse of the Lake* (1789)—and began planning her third novel, *Celestina* (1791), in the summer of 1789, the same summer that saw the Estates General convention in France and the storming of the Bastille. Smith was one of those who, before things got ugly, supported the revolutionaries' goals to abolish the feudal system enforced by the monarchy and aristocracy, to reduce (if not eliminate) the power of the church, and to foster equality by privileging individual merit over birth or class. The first three of *Celestina*'s four sluggish volumes are an old-fashioned romance: Celestina is a standard-issue heroine—a beautiful, financially independent orphan who speaks and writes like a middle-aged moral philosopher—and is loved by a sentimental young man named Willoughby. Their desire to marry is of course thwarted by various rivals and obstacles, especially class discrimination (Celestina's parentage is unknown and presumed common), until they overcome them and marry near the end. Been there, read that. Smith self-consciously acknowledges the hoariness of her form when she inserts an interpolated "history" of a secondary character, who admits "It is something like the personages with whom we are presented in old romances, and who meet in forests and among rocks and recount their adventures" (2.11), complete with old letters and dialogue recited verbatim from memory. But in the fourth volume there are increasing potshots at feudal aristocracy and talk of revolution: in another interpolated history near the end, a Frenchman who fought in the American Revolution states that the experience "awakened in my mind a spirit of freedom" (4.11), and

while Willoughby is in France researching the secret of Celestina's birth (she was dropped off as an infant at a Celestine convent, hence her name), we hear of the outrages committed during the *ancien régime*. What begins as a conventional romance ends in early 1790 as a politicized novel reporting the latest news from France, though the message is muddled when we learn that Celestina is not a commoner of outstanding merit but the daughter of an aristocratic mother. But the infusion of politics in the traditionally apolitical romance genre makes *Celestina* a bellwether of a new direction in the British novel.

"The first full-blown revolutionary novel" in Joyce Tompkins's informed opinion (300) is *Anna St. Ives* (1792) by Thomas Holcroft (1745–1809), the self-educated son of a shoemaker. Like *Celestina*, this epistolary novel is structured along the lines of a traditional romance: beautiful, aristocratic Anna must choose between two admirers: Frank Henley—the self-educated son of her father's steward/gardener—and Coke Clifton, a Lovelacy rake whom Anna believes can be reformed into a great person, enlisting selfless Frank's help in doing so. Unlike Smith, Holcroft doesn't make any reference to the French revolution, but both Anna and Frank are committed to its radical ideas: Frank looks forward to "the felicity of that state of society when personal property no longer shall exist, when the whole torrent of mind shall unite in inquiry after the beautiful and the true, . . . when individual selfishness shall be unknown, and when all shall labour for the good of all!" (letter 82). Similarly, Anna believes "that it is not only possible, but perfectly practicable and highly natural, for men to associate with most fraternal union, happiness, peace, and virtue were but all distinction of rank and riches wholly abolished; were all the false wants of luxury, which are the necessary offspring of individual property, cut off; were all equally obliged to labour for the wants of nature, and nothing more; and were they all afterward to unite and to employ the remainder of their time, which would then be ample, in the promotion of art and science, and in the search of wisdom and truth!" (63). They both consider themselves among "those beings who justly claim superiority of understanding, and thence a right to direct the world" (49).

Devious Clifton plays upon the egotistic idealism of these "catechumenical inspectors of morality, these self-appointed overseers of the conscience" (54), pretending to believe in their radical philosophy in

order to win Anna's hand. (She admires Frank, but fears it would set a bad example to marry below her station.) But when she sees through Clifton's pretense and spurns him, he vows revenge and abducts them, confining Frank in a private lunatic asylum and Anna in an isolated house, where he tries and fails to rape her. This part is obviously indebted to Richardson, along with his dramatic but unrealistic "writing to the moment." The altruistic kids triumph over the selfish villain, and Anna decides to marry the lower-class Frank in defiance of custom, and in defiance of the romance genre, because Frank is *not* revealed at the end to be "an aristocrat kidnapped in infancy," as Stevenson notes is the case in so many novels of the period, and thus becomes "the first proletarian hero in the English novel" (168).

In what is arguably the best use of the epistolary form in English since *Humphry Clinker*, Holcroft allows other characters to exemplify in their stylistically diverse letters the various social prejudices Frank and Anna hope to eradicate. In fact, he allows Clifton to make so many witty, disparaging remarks about their utopian dreams that the novel can almost be read as an exposé of social idealism. Frank is too good to be true—a Christ figure in a secular-humanist novel blessedly free of religious cant—but Anna, while inanely idealistic, is a truly admirable character. Worried at first that she may set a bad example by marrying Frank, she sets a splendid example near the end by repulsing Clifton's attempts to rape her, and then by escaping over what her timid maid describes as "a high wall which no woman could climb." Anna retorts, "it was weakness and folly to suppose that men were better to climb walls then women" (126), and manages to scale it and escape. If Holcroft's female readers took nothing else away from *Anna St. Ives*, it is that women need not remain behind walls built by men. Anna comes to realize the utopia she and Frank envision is premature —"Well, well!—Another century, and then —!" (63)—but her "daring defiance of the world and its opinions" (which Burney's Mrs. Delvile *Cecilia* condemned as an "odious" attitude in a woman) makes Anna one of the most heroic heroines in 18th-century fiction.

Holcroft was friends with William Godwin (1756–1836), the former dissenting minister-turned-philosopher whose *Enquiry Concerning Political Justice* (1793) is partly indebted to *Anna St. Ives*, and who decided to emulate his friend by dramatizing his political views in a novel. *Things As*

They Are, better known as *Caleb Williams* (1794), is a gripping, startlingly original novel that works on several levels. It takes the form of a confession by a man unfairly accused of robbing his former employer—the wealthy, benevolent Ferdinando Falkland—and who has been hounded, imprisoned, and persecuted ever since he left Falkland's service because he discovered his secret shame: that Falkland once killed a man for publicly humiliating him—a brutish neighboring squire who deserved to be exterminated—and unforgivably framed two other good men for the murder. At a surface level, *Caleb Williams* reads like a crime novel in which Caleb, an amateur sleuth driven by what he admits is "fatal" curiosity, uncovers the crime and forces a confession from Falkland, who then threatens to kill him if he reveals it, causing Caleb to flee and live life on the lam. Falkland hires a bounty hunter to stay on his tail, forcing Caleb to don disguises, serve time in prison and escape, and attempt to leave the country, foiled at every step to start a new life. He finally gets his day in court, and in the published conclusion, he is exonerated after Falkland confesses, an ending Gary Kelly rightly calls "wishful thinking" (196). (In the more realistic ending Godwin first wrote—which is included as an appendix in most modern editions—the court sides with Falkland and condemns Caleb to house arrest, where he goes mad.) Even at this literal level, *Caleb Williams* is a compelling novel of Dostoevskian power and intensity: both a psychological study in guilt, crime, and punishment, and a searing attack on England's landowning squirearchy, its corrupt legal and penitentiary systems, and an oppressive government devoted to maintaining the feudal privileges of the aristocracy with police-state tactics.

To readers in the 1790s, *Caleb Williams* was also a thinly veiled dramatization of the crackdown on political dissent in England in the 1790s in response to the revolutionary upheavals in France. Caleb represents the liberal writers who were being silenced and imprisoned while Godwin was writing his novel. "Terror was the order of the day," Godwin wrote in his preface to the second edition, "and it was feared that even the humble novelists might be shown to be constructively a traitor"—and indeed, after Holcroft published another radical novel in 1794 called *Hugh Trevor*, he was indicted for "high treason" and thrown in prison for two months. Falkland represents not only conservative critics like Edmund Burke—in one sense, *Caleb Williams* is a response to Burke's polarizing *Reflections on*

the Revolution in France (1790)—but also the aristocratic class that supposedly honors the chivalric code and respects tradition, qualities that Burke regarded as the foundation of society. Caleb discovers the "secret" that all such notions—rank, privilege, "gentlemanly" codes of honor, the divine right of kings—are a sham, a cover for a power elite that despises "the people" and will shamelessly evoke God and country to maintain their position of authority. (The Christian god is included in that despotic oligarchy: near the end, Caleb compares Falkland's persecution of him to "what has been described of the eye of Omniscience pursuing the guilty sinner" [3.14].) Given "things as they are," Caleb's decision to go public about Falkland's secret doubles as call for revolt against the class he represents:

> Who that saw the situation in its true light would wait till their oppressors thought fit to decree their destruction, and not take arms in their defense while it was yet in their power? Which was most meritorious, the unresisting and dastardly submission of a slave, or the enterprise and gallantry of the man who dared to assert his claims? Since, by the partial administration of our laws, innocence, when power was armed against it, had nothing better to hope for than guilt, what man of true courage would fail to set these laws at defiance, and, if he must suffer by their injustice, at least take care that he had first shown his contempt of their yoke? (3.2)

Caleb comes to regard Falkland as a Don Quixote figure (which is how Godwin and others regarded Burke): an admirable man in some ways, but whose commitment to outdated notions of honor and chivalry wreak havoc at both the personal level—aristocrats killing each other in duels over trifling points of honor—and at the public level by allowing the upper classes to deprive others of their rights and to literally get away with murder. Caleb goes all the way to the top, calling Falkland "a copy of what monarchs are, who reckon among the instruments of their power prisons of state" (2.10). (How apt that the British monarch at this time, George III, was insane.) As Frans De Bruyn writes in an informative essay on Burke's Quixotism and Godwin's use of him as a model for Falkland, "Chivalric virtues turn out to be virtues in name only. Chivalry is no rational system of ethics and moral conduct but the product of a social order founded upon

oppression and inequality" (732). Falkland admits as much in his mid-novel confession to Caleb, and that's the secret that both Caleb and Godwin vow to reveal: "I will tell a tale—! The justice of the country shall hear me!" (3.15). A mesmerizing page-turner as well as a powerful indictment of the status quo, *Caleb Williams* is easily the most significant English novel of the 1790s and remains (unfortunately) an accurate assessment of the power structures still in place.

Elizabeth Inchbald, whose not-so *Simple Story* is sometimes called a Jacobin novel, read *Caleb Williams* in manuscript, and in return showed Godwin the first draft of a short novel published two years later as *Nature and Art* (1796), which "commands a central place," her modern editor feels, "in the history of the English Jacobin novel" (12). But it's an amateurish production, a programmatic "sociopolitical fable"[329] pitting the noble poor against the idle rich by way of the story of two cousins, one born and reared in Africa ignorant of English customs, and one raised in England in the lap of luxury—Henry representing "nature" and William "art" (as in artificial beliefs and behavior). Like Voltaire's Ingenu, Inchbald's nature boy asks many embarrassing questions of his civilized hosts after he arrives in England, and makes one Jacobin threat upon learning that an aristocrat distributes £100 among his peasants every Christmas: "I thought it was prudent in you to give a little, lest the poor, driven to despair, should take all" (chap. 19). But Inchbald damages the dichotomy when Henry falls for a modest, plain-looking woman not in the natural way a "savage" would, but per the highly artificial, *un*natural strictures of sentiment; the Ingenu suddenly becomes Sir Charles Grandison. Thereafter, the novel contrasts his artificial courtship of Rebecca with his cousin's more natural seduction and abandonment of a lower-class girl named Hannah, culminating in a trial in which William, now an influential judge, unknowingly condemns Hannah to death, accompanied by further potshots at "the evils that riches draw upon their owner" (47).

Nature and Art is lazily plotted, relies on stock characters and convenient coincidences, kills off characters as needed, concludes lamely, and indulges in what its original reviewers called "improbabilities" and "impossibilities." The novel's fairytale aura may excuse some of these, yet Inchbald evidently agreed, trying and failing to correct them in later editions. Her criticisms of

the vapid upper classes are on target, but they are same easy targets that novelists had been hitting all century long. The only new tactic she adds to literary class warfare is the distinction she makes between readers about a quarter of the way through:

> Readers of superior rank, if the passions which rage in the bosom of the inferior class of humankind are beneath your sympathy, throw aside this little history, for Rebecca Rymer and Hannah Primrose are its heroines.
>
> But you, unprejudiced reader, whose liberal observations are not confined to stations, but who consider all mankind alike deserving your investigation; who believe that there exist in some knowledge without the advantage of instruction; refinement of sentiment independent of elegant society; honourable pride of heart without dignity of blood; and genius destitute of art to render it conspicuous—*You* will, perhaps, venture to read on, . . . (21)

"Genius destitute of art to render it conspicuous" is a straight line I won't touch.

In 1792, Birmingham businessman Robert Bage (1728–1801) published a novel entitled *Man as He Is*, a Smolletian tale of a young English baronet who parties his way through Europe before settling down, and followed it four years later with *Hermsprong; or, Man as He Is Not*, which not only appeared the same month as *Nature and Art* (January 1796) but develops from a similar premise: a European-born lad raised among the "aborigines" of America arrives in Cornwall circa 1795 to encounter the absurdities and inequalities of English civilization. It too has a fairytale quality as this young American triumphs over despicable representatives of the old aristocracy, the clergy, and the law by braving their threats with the arch assurance of a Shavian superman.[330] Strong, handsome Hermsprong is a fairytale ideal—as the subtitle suggests, he represents "man as he *should* be"—but his cheerful contempt for hidebound customs and oppressive policies is effectively conveyed by the novel's cheeky narrator, a local resident named Gregory Glen whose flippant attitude makes *Hermsprong*'s radical social criticism seem like genial good sense. The comic novel has more in common with the those published earlier in the century than with

the gloomy novels on the same themes by Godwin, Wollstonecraft, and Hays that appeared in the 1790s. Sterne especially comes to mind as the narrator occasionally intrudes to argue with his copyeditor, to wish that he could insert an engraving at one point (and promises to do so if his novel reaches a fourth edition), and in one instance, to freeze Hermsprong in the act of kissing a lady's hand as the narrator "scribble[s] two or three pages" to a hypothetical critic (1.16). While not exactly revolutionary, these departures from literary convention mirror the departures from sociopolitical conventions proposed by Hermstrong and other liberal characters.

Hermsprong contains a strong feminist argument, voiced by a smart, impertinent young lady named Maria Fluart who isn't afraid to sass patriarchal oppressors or, in one delightful scene, to pull a gun on them. Her best friend, the timidly obedient heroine of the novel, represents the "church-and-king" conservatives of the time who didn't dare challenge the tyranny of their overlords, exhibiting a slave mentality toward tradition and "duty." (Inexplicably, Hermsprong falls for her rather than for the freethinking Fluart, which compromises the novel's liberal thesis in the same way that Henry's romantic choice in *Nature and Art* does.) Again like Inchbald's inferior work, *Hermsprong* is a little too programmtic and concludes with a traditional happy ending that papers over the serious social problems exposed throughout the novel. But if you catch more flies with honey than vinegar, then Bage's enjoyable political comedy may have converted more readers to the cause than the more serious political novels of the decade.

During the 1790s, there was also a backwash of reactionary, antirevolutionary novels by conservative authors who were alarmed rather than inspired by the anarchic ideas expressed in books like Paine's *Rights of Man* (for which he was convicted of treason in England in absentia), Wollstonecraft's *Vindication* (which is cited a few times in *Hermsprong*), and especially Godwin's *Political Justice*. We've already seen one example in Hamilton's *Memoirs of Modern Philosophers*, which followed the same template established earlier in the decade: reductio ad absurdum dramatizations of the most radical notions in those books, especially those dealing with women's liberation.[331] They usually feature a philosopher-

villain (often modeled on Godwin) who spouts anarchistic nonsense between seductions of political groupies, and who inevitably leads his followers into some sort of disaster. Most were written by hacks who expressed a "deep-seated contempt for novels" (Grenby, 12), and the critical consensus is these novels have little or no aesthetic value. Even the best of the lot, *The Vagabond* (1799) by George Walker (1772–1847), lacks "anything approaching conventional characterization, or anything resembling a regular plot," his modern editor admits. "In lieu of characters, we find a rich intertextual tissue of political innuendo, malicious gossip and quotations from a wide range of (mainly) reformist writers; in lieu of a plot, we find a mass of historical events, woven into an idiosyncratic and deliberately anachronistic tapestry of revisionist historiography."[332] Such writers used the novel merely as a convenient vehicle to broadcast their views, not because they had any interest, or even respect, for the genre. Since they didn't care about novels, we don't care about them; let's turn instead to a group that cared very much about the genre.

CRITIFICTIONS; OR, NOVELS ABOUT NOVELS

During what I have called the British novel's wilderness years, many cultural critics continued to preach against worshiping the golden calves found in fiction—dangerously handsome men, attractively disobedient women—and prophesied all sorts of evils from novel-reading. As late as 1792, one hater insisted that "The increase of novels help to account for the increase of prostitution and for the numerous adulteries and elopements that we hear of in the different parts of the kingdom,"[333] and part 3 of Cheryl Nixon's *Novel Definitions* offers a noxious sampling of similar screeds. But some inventive writers chose to address the novel's nature in the form of a novel, some defending it, some satirizing it. As we've seen, many 18th-century novels include occasional metafictional remarks on their medium, but critifictions differ in making the medium the message of the work.[334]

The state of the English novel in 1772 is the subject of an anonymous comic novel published that year whose full title is *The Egg; or, The Memoirs of Gregory Giddy, Esq., with the Lucubrations of Messrs. Francis*

Flimsy, Frederic Florid, and Ben Bombast. To Which Are Added the Private Opinions of Patty Pout, Lucy Luscious, and Priscilla Positive; also the Memoirs of a Right Honorable Puppy; or, the Bon Ton Displayed*; Together with* Anecdotes of a Right Honorable Scoundrel.[335] I could have treated it earlier under "Mixed Media" because it is an omelet of different forms and genres: after an "Advertisement" that draws attention to the novel's novelty, and a prayer addressed to critics and readers to look kindly on it "because we have deviated from the common track, so much beaten and pursued by our brother novelists, and have struck into a new path" (2), the author switches from third- to first-person "in defiance to all the rules of criticism" to allow Gregory Giddy to tell the playfully allegorical tale of how he became a novelist. Thereafter the heterogeneous text switches between prose and poetry; takes play form occasionally; includes two verse tales, an it-narrative, and an essay on fame; and ends in the form of an epistolary novel.

But *The Egg* belongs here because it is primarily concerned with novel-writing: cash-strapped Gregory Giddy contemplates turning highwayman in emulation of Macheath in *The Beggar's Opera*, but is persuaded by his friend Frank Flimsy to "turn novel spinner" instead, like him: "why I have written within these last two years seventeen different novels of two volumes each" (26). Advised by him and other friends named Florid and Bombast not to worry about writing a novel with "intrinsic merit" or even with any meaning, Giddy goes home and concocts a clichéd romance, which he then reads aloud to his friends, who frequently interrupt and critique it, giving the author the opportunity to satirize current trends in fiction. They approve of his ridiculous decision to use foreign names like Lorenzo and Horatio in an English setting, citing novelists who use ancient Roman names like Cornelia and Octavia in contemporary novels—a dig at Sarah Scott and Sarah Fielding. These barroom critics pass judgment on the major novelists of the previous generation—"Richardson is sentimental without plot; Fielding has a redundancy of plot, with very little sentiment; Smollett shifts his scene too often, and touches the heart too seldom; Sterne is as warm and bright as the sun, but as inconstant in his excellencies as the moon" (37).[336] Florid feels "Most of the modern novels intended as pieces of humour are unnatural, and those designed as sentimental are insipid"

(37–38), to which Bombast adds: "My opinion of what novels *should be*, and what novels *are*, is in short this. A novel should be an exact representation of simple nature as she appears while the sun is in its meridian glory, but a modern novel is an ill-drawn picture of distorted nature delineated while the sun is in eclipse" (37). Giddy's romance novelette isn't long enough for a book, so his friends contribute pieces they've written, as do their female companions (named in the title), furnishing *Reader's Digest* versions of pop fiction. (The author clearly has more Augustan tastes, reflected in his numerous citations from Pope and 17th-century poets.)

Enlightened and emboldened by their examples, Giddy writes two more novelettes on the theme of female vanity: the first is a bitter satire of a stupid woman who elopes with an actor, cheats on him, and is confined to a madhouse; after satisfying the asylum-keeper's lust, she is turned over to a rich businessman who has a fetish for madwomen, a role she's forced to play to save her skin. The second mocks a society airhead who is "under the influence of a poetical frenzy" and gives herself the "poetical" name of Celinda (like the girl in Lennox's *Henrietta*). The latter is a much more sophisticated version of the plot in Giddy's first novelette, and represents his birth as a real novelist (which is perhaps what the novel's title means), one who rejects "the common track, so much beaten and pursued by our brother novelists" in favor of fictions with more bite and daring. *The Egg* thus critiques current fiction and offers an alternative approach, albeit one too delightfully idiosyncratic to attract many followers. It takes talent to write a novel like this, the author implies; anyone can write conventional novels.

The best-informed critifiction of this time is *The Progress of Romance* (1785) by Clara Reeve, who you'll recall had already written one novel (and translated Barclay's *Argenis*) and went on to write several others. Narrated in dialogic form, the novel concerns a bibliophile named Euphrasia who meets with her friends Hortensius and Sophronia every Thursday evening for three months, not to gossip, flirt, or play cards (as in most novels) but to discuss a history of the novel that Euphrasia plans to write. Each evening, she walks them through her chronological account, responding to questions from Sophronia and challenges from Hortensius; like many men of the time, he has a low opinion of fiction and little idea

how the novel evolved over the centuries, so Euphrasia faces the twofold task of defending fiction as a legitimate, moral form of discourse and demonstrating the continuum that leads from ancient romances to modern novels. Though she makes a distinction between the two modes—"The Romance is an heroic fable which treats of fabulous persons and things. The Novel is a picture of real life and manners, and of the times in which it is written"[337]—Euphrasia argues that the latter is an organic outgrowth from the former, not a separate genre, and that the best novels retain the virtuous ideals of older romances. Spritely Sophronia acts as moderator between the antagonists—she teases Hortensius about meeting "weekly two women, to talk of romances" (2)—and gradually Hortensius comes around to Euphrasia's way of thinking, with certain reservations.

It is a remarkably erudite work—Reeve/Euphrasia seems to have read everything from ancient Greek romances to the latest novels—and Reeve ingeniously maps her bibliographic treatise onto the coordinates of the courtship novel. In a sense, Euphrasia approaches Hortensius like any romance heroine angling for a husband, talking of virtuous novels to intimate her own virtuous habits, and there even seems to be a little sexual tension in some of their exchanges. When Euphrasia tells Hortensius she will come to their next meeting armed with notes and extracts, he calls them "Artillery and firearms against the small sword, [my] tongue," to which she replies, "if I should come to a close engagement, the small sword will destroy what may escape the artillery" (1). Perhaps I'm misreading these as *Taming of the Shrew*ish double entendres, but Euphrasia certainly courts his good opinion in a way familiar from novels of the period. And just as any heroine encounters setbacks in her romantic quest, Euphrasia expresses doubts about whether she can actually finish her alternative history of the novel. About halfway through the *Progress*, she comes to realize "how arduous an undertaking I have engaged, and to fear I shall leave it unfinished"—I hear ya, sister—but fortunately her friends rally around and encourage her to persevere, giving her permission to publish their conversations as long as she changes their names—hence the storybook names Euphrasia, Sophronia, and Hortensius.

As an appendix, Reeves tacks on "The History of Charoba, Queen of Egypt," freely adapted (via a 1682 translation) from a medieval history of

ancient Egypt by Murtada ibn al-'Afif.[338] Set in the days of the patriarch Abraham, it tells how Charoba and her enchantress nurse overcame an unwanted suitor, an object lesson on how "a man of strength and valour should be overcome by the subtlety of a woman." In her preface, Reeves says she includes the tale as an example of an Egyptian romance—a *male* friend doubted such things existed—but it is also an allegory for how subtle Euphrasia overcomes Hortensius's limited, patriarchal view of the novel, shared by most previous historians of fiction. (She's quite severe on Huet's sketchy *History of Romances*, for example.) The women in the tale resort to poisoning, trickery, and genocide to get their way, which doesn't square with Euphrasia's old-maidish insistence on moral fiction.[339] But the appendix is one more unusual feature of this unusual novel. On the eleventh evening Euphrasia reads aloud a list of "novels and stories original and uncommon"—*A Tale of a Tub, Peter Wilkins, John Buncle, Tristram Shandy*, et al—a list on which *The Progress of Romance* undoubtedly belongs.

Another bibliophiliac lady is the protagonist of *The Victim of Fancy* (1786) by Elizabeth Sophia Tomlins (1763–1828). Tomlins critiques Goethe's *Sorrows of Young Werther* by mimicking its form (epistolary novel with supplementary information provided at the end by an editor) and by featuring a young woman under the spell of what she calls "Werteromania." Gaga over Goethe's controversial novella, Theresa Morven (yet another beautiful, well-off orphan) thinks it has been misunderstood: it was widely condemned for glamorizing adultery and suicide, while Theresa argues (with several people in the novel) that it is a dramatic *warning* against such actions. She loves it so much that she not only writes like Werther, but wants to meet the author—by which she means not "this Dr. Goethé" but the English translator responsible for "that animated expression, that overwhelming tenderness, that frenzy of sensibility which those interesting pages display."[340] Fortunately for Tomlins, the translator was anonymous—it was done by Richard Graves, author of *The Spiritual Quixote*—enabling her to contrive what, in other hands, would be a comedy: Theresa talks her aunt into traveling to Bath, where the translator is reputedly staying, so her unrequited suitor talks his brother Vincent into showing up there and impersonating the translator (to turn her off by behaving badly,

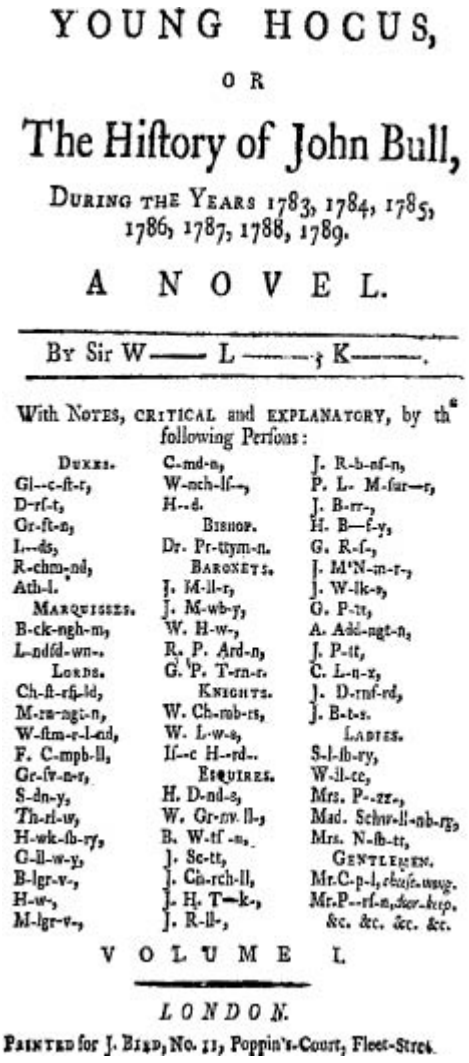
presumably). Meanwhile, a guy named Frank has become as obsessed with Theresa as Werther is with Lotte, and, knowing of her Werteromania, sends her a note pretending to be the translator, then reveals his love and threatens suicide. She manages to disarm him, and just then the fake translator shows up, and later has a duel with (in effect) the real Werther of the novel. But rather than exploit the comic possibilities of all this, à la *The Female Quixote*, Tomlins plays it as tragedy. Theresa has fallen in love at first sight with Vincent, less because she suspects he is Goethe's translator than because of his resemblance to her beloved brother, a soldier stationed in Gibraltar and the recipient of most of her letters; her love for him is so excessive that when the brother returns to England near the end fatally wounded, Theresa falls into a fever, and shortly after he dies, she dies, despite Vincent's tender ministrations. In her final line, Theresa admits it is her brother "for whom I lived, for whom I die" (49), and the novel ends in an ocean of tears and treacly sentiments.

What Tomlins adds to the ongoing debate over the dangers of fiction is the danger of hero-worship. Theresa is too chaste to be called a literary groupie, but she's one of the first to extend her enthusiasm for novels to their creators, and to creative people in general (including the creator of the natural world, which Theresa celebrates in language as rapturous as Werther's). In addition to Goethe's translator, Theresa admits, "I would travel miles to behold a Gibbon or a Hayley, to view the features of a Reynolds or a Copley;[341] and I should feel that gratification in seeing them which the presence of a superior being might be supposed to produce" (14). She has already learned that an artist is not necessarily "a superior being" after a curate who delivered a beautiful sermon turns out to be a sardonic hypocrite, but that doesn't prevent her from wanting also to meet the latest celebrity author to visit Bath: Sophia Lee, whose Gothic historical novel *The Recess* Theresa devours in three days, surprised to find it as good as Burney's *Cecilia*. Theresa is a "victim of fancy," by which Tomlins means a victim of the unrealistic expectations raised both by novels and by artists, but she complicates her message by broadening "fancy" to encompass other unregulated feelings, such as Theresa's near-incestuous love for her brother; her brother's "romantic admiration of the general you have so well distinguished yourself under" (25; he is fatally wounded while assisting the

general); and fanciful religious effusions. I'm not sure Tomlins meant to muddy her message with suggestions of incest, suicidal/homoerotic patriotism, and impiety. Instead, she probably meant to rewrite Goethe's novella to offer a character more worthy of sympathy: not an adulterous suicide but a benevolent, sentimental sister. At any rate, *The Victim of Fancy* is an interesting example of writing a novel to critique another novel, of fighting fiction with fiction.

Not one but a rout of readers critique *Young Hocus; or, The History of John Bull* (1790) by a writer who identifies himself only as Sir W— L—s. As the subtitle suggests, the short novel is a sequel to Arbuthnot's poltical satire, updated to give a caustic, coded account of British domestic and foreign policies in the 1780s. Essentially it is a scurrilous satire on William Pitt the Younger, prime minister at the time, whose "hocus-pocus" politicking provided the name of the author's "hero." Like Arbuthnot's novel, it begins by allegorizing England's political problems via the disputes between Mr. and Mrs. John Bull and their employees, but halfway through it imitates *Martinus Scriblerus* by giving a ludicrous account of the birth and early exploits of young Hocus. But that's only half the story: the other half is in the voluminous footnotes from about 60 individuals, itemized on the novel's elaborate title page. Rather than wait for someone else to supply a key to his characters, as Arbuthnot did, L—s followed Pope's example in *The Dunciad Variorum*, though his commentators are not critics but readers, ranging from real supporters and opponents of Pitt down to a local cheesemonger and doorman. They expose the identities of the author's allegorical characters, challenge his interpretations or add corroborating details, and in general raise a heteroglossic ruckus that almost overwhelms the main text. Like *Charlotte Summers* and some other metafictional novels in the 1750s, *Young Hocus* anticipates readers' responses and makes them part of the text, but it also critiques the variety of ways readers read novels. Some are interested only in unlocking this roman à clef by identifying its characters, others go off on digressions based on something in the text, others want to argue with the author, and one near the end even threatens him. In a footnote in the final chapter, John Scott (a Pitt supporter) senses the author plans to criticize Pitt's policy in India in the next volume, and warns the author he'd better not go there; and sure

enough, though the title page announces this as Volume 1, there was no Volume 2.



YOUNG HOCUS,

OR

The Hiſtory of John Bull,

DURING THE YEARS 1783, 1784, 1785, 1786, 1787, 1788, 1789.

A NOVEL.

BY Sir W—— L——, K——.

With NOTES, CRITICAL and EXPLANATORY, by the following Perſons:

DUKES.
Gl--c-ſt-r,
D-rſ-t,
Gr-ſt-n,
L--ds,
R-chm-nd,
Ath-l.

MARQUISSES.
B-ck-ngh-m,
L-ndſd-wn-.

LORDS.
Ch-ſt-rfi-ld,
M-rn-ngt-n,
W-ſtm-r-l-nd,
F. C-mpb-ll,
Gr-ſv-n-r,
S-dn-y,
Th-rl-w,
H-wk-ſb-ry,
G-ll-w-y,
B-lgr-v-,
H-w-,
M-lgr-v-,

C-md-n,
W-nch-lſ-,
H--d.

BISHOP.
Dr. Pr-ttym-n.

BARONETS.
J. M-ll-r,
J. M-wb-y,
W. H-w-,
R. P. Ard-n,
G. P. T-rn-r.

KNIGHTS.
W. Ch-mb-rs,
W. L-w-s,
If--c H--rd..

ESQUIRES.
H. D-nd-s,
W. Gr-nv-ll-,
B. W-ſt-n,
J. Sc-tt,
J. Ch-rch-ll,
J. H. T—k-,
J. R-ll-,

J. R-b-nſ-n,
P. L. M-ſur—r,
J. B-rr-,
H. B—ſ-y,
G. R-ſ-,
J. M'N-m-r-,
J. W-lk-r,
G. P-tt,
A. Add-ngt-n,
J. P-tt,
C. L-n-x,
J. D-nſ-rd,
J. B-t-s.

LADIES.
S-l-ſb-ry,
W-ll-ce,
Mrs. P--zz-,
Mad. Schw-ll-nb-rg,
Mrs. N-ſb-tt,

GENTLEMEN.
Mr. C-p-l, *chriſt. name.*
Mr. P--rſ-n, *door-keep.*
&c. &c. &c. &c.

VOLUME I.

LONDON.

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Young Hocus is amusing in spots, but like Smollett's *Adventures of an Atom*—which it also resembles in scatology—both the story and commentary are too dependent upon inside jokes and a detailed knowledge of the politics of the time to be enjoyable today. (Another level of footnoted commentary would be needed to truly appreciate it.) What *is* interesting is the author's dramatization of readers' responses and his parody of the critical-edition format. He has further fun with the conventions of fiction: the author dedicates the novel not to an influential patron but to himself, bragging for pages about his knowledge of artillery, and adds a fictitious editor who, after explaining he found the manuscript in a garden wall and

apologizing for some *Tale of a Tub*-type lacunae, confidently asserts the novel deserves a place "in most private libraries of the kingdom, besides pleasing the readers of circulating libraries, whom it is particularly calculated to entertain." It's also interesting to note that its author (and/or publisher) had no problem calling this eccentric concoction "a novel" on the title page, understanding the term in a much broader sense than some critics today do.

Charlotte Palmer, on the other hand, wasn't so sure. In her preface to *It Is, and It Is Not a Novel* (1792), she explains her fence-sitting title:

> After having been advised to publish, a worthy friend called on me and, speaking of the letters (part of which he had seen), said, "And pray what do you mean to call your book when finished—a novel?" I replied, "I do not know what to call it, for it is, and it is not a novel." "A very curious composition truly," said he. "It *is*, and it is *not*, is quite in the female style of contradiction!" I was much obliged by his remark, which at once furnished me with a title for which I had entreated THOUGHT in vain! I then gave up all application to her, being fully persuaded (in a double sense of the expression) that it is and it is not a novel.[342]

She playfully resists patriarchal pigeon-holing and recognizes the still-fluid nature of the genre, but what she really means is that some parts of this epistolary novel are based on real events: later in her preface she says she might be "suspected of borrowing from Richardson" in one episode, but insists "the circumstances relating immediately to the heroine are literally true; I had a slight acquaintance with the young lady concealed under that name" (viii), and during the first half of the novel there are authorial footnotes like "This is not a fictitious name" and "The painting which I have so poorly described is not imaginary" (1:119, 187). So if you define a novel (as one minor character does) as a book "that has no truth in it" (2:6), then this *is not* a novel. But *it is* a novel in the sense that this is an "offspring of my imagination," as Palmer admits in the preface; she does not pretend, as do Richardson and other some epistolary novelists, that she's merely the editor of a bundle of real letters. So not only is it a novel, but it is a novel about novels. Palmer's protagonists—a half dozen upper-class young women who effortlessly find husbands in rural England—are all

novel-readers; they discuss or mention *Gil Blas*, *Clarissa*, *Sir Charles Grandison* (he's too "cool and collected" in one lady's opinion), *Rasselas*, *Almoran and Hamet*, *A Sentimental Journey*, and *The Vicar of Wakefield*, but they make different uses of novels. Cleopatra Wingham—the witty, flighty young woman who makes fun of the others but marries badly—has learned all her coquettish airs from them: "I have not read *novels* for *nothing*" (1:80). But Elizabeth Digby, like her prudent friend Mary Eglantine, learns morality from them. Her favorite novel (and the author's too, as she reveals in her preface) is a forgotten best-seller by Swiss writer Isabelle de Montolieu entitled *Caroline of Lichfield* (1786), not "as having any superiority of language above others, or that there is any plot more skilfully managed; its moral tendency is what entitles it to a preference" (1:195). Like some novels of the time, *It Is, and It Is Not a Novel* is a conduct book in fictional form—perhaps another sense in which the title is to be understood.

Palmer plays with the conventions of naming in novels: Cleopatra is of course pleased with her regal, romantic name and thinks Mary is "a stupid name for a heroine in a novel" (1:96); but after Cleopatra disgraces herself, Mary—one of the heroines of this novel—comments, "Unfortunate Cleopatra! had her name, as she observed, been Mary, Sarah, Elizabeth or Ann, she might not have had a turn for such enterprising love intrigues as she has *really* put in execution . . ." (2:253; that is, she would have left them in novels, not tried them out in the *real* world). This might be a call for the use of more realistic names in fiction, yet Palmer also employs artificial tag-names straight out of Restoration comedy: there's a teacher named Mrs. Precept, a curate named Mr. Cassock, and military officers named Captain Skirmish and Colonel Cannonade. (After Cleopatra Wingham falls from grace, her name is clipped to Patty. Another young lady who is prudent like Mary but witty like Cleopatra has a name that combines both qualities: Sarah Brilliant.) *It is* a novel because of names like that, but *it is not* a novel because it also uses nonnovelistic names.

Charlotte Palmer's novel doesn't dramatize the contrast between prudent and imprudent behavior as perceptively as Jane Austen would in *Sense and Sensibility*—which coincidentally(?) includes a character named Charlotte Palmer—for her contrast is black and white, as opposed to Austen's shades of gray. Her didactism is tiresome and predictable, though occasionally it is

offset by some clever wordplay: after the pompous Mr. Cassock begins a sentence, “If you had ever seen the extra-regular exploits of these extra-judicials, . . .” Sarah brilliantly jokes, “I believe you are particularly cross tonight, as you use so many X Xs” (1:265–66). Let’s just say it is, and it is not an interesting novel.

Another novel that satirized current trends in fiction is *Susanna; or, Traits of a Modern Miss* (1795), attributed to Susanna Bullock.[343] After 17-year-old Susanna Bridgeman subscribes to a circulating library, she takes on various fiction-inspired personae: regarding herself as another Clarissa when her parents suggest marriage, she runs away from home to elope with an aristocrat who looks like a romance hero, but she is humiliated to learn that his love letters were forged by his wily valet. After her father dies, Susanna goes to stay with the modest Benfield family, whose parents have given their daughters sentimental-romance names, even though “it was as utterly out of reason to expect Selina Ethelinda would make pies or superintended cooking, as to imagine Adeline Clara Eleonora could darn stockings or iron her own linen.” Susanna then elopes with an older bankrupt lord who owns a castle, which Susanna imagines is haunted, allowing her to play the persecuted heroine of a Gothic novel until she learns her servants have been pulling her leg. When she next meets a man who sounds like the hero of a pastoral romance, she becomes “Amelia” to his “Celadon,” and after her husband catches them in the act, she is humiliated again to learn that Celadon is the same valet who tricked her earlier. After reading novels espousing radical philosophy, Susanna “learns to conceive of herself as a victim of social injustice,” Shepperson reports. “She escapes from her ‘persecutors,’ and, ‘with a truly *republican spirit*,’ sets out for London, where she anticipates experiencing ‘the joys of “Liberty and equality.”’ But the night is dark and rainy; she takes the wrong direction, and when morning comes she finds herself in Cornwall instead of London, ill from exposure, and without money or friends, an object lesson for radical-minded young ladies” (117). Reverting to Gothic-heroine mode, Susanna is locked in her room but eventually flees the castle and eventually embraces Methodism, exchanging one kind of fiction for another. There the satiric author leaves her, for Susanna “grows every instant too sublime for my pen.”

Susanna was published by William Lane, a former owner of a circulating library whose Minerva Press was flooding the market with sentimental and Gothic romances in the 1790s. (It's odd that he would accept a novel satirizing the kind of novels he published, but publishers are odd ducks.) Disgusted with the popularity of these trends in the decade following the publication of his *Vathek*, William Beckford retaliated with a pair of parodies of pop fiction. Parodies (burlesques, satires, pastiches) of particular genres are almost by definition critifictions, for they use fiction to criticize fictional modes and styles their authors feel debase the art of literature. Since most of these novels were written by women, Beckford used female pseudonyms: *Modern Novel Writing; or, The Elegant Enthusiast, and Interesting Emotions of Arabella Bloomville. A Rhapsodical Romance Interspersed with Poetry* (1796) purports to be by Lady Harriet Marlow, while *Azemia: A Descriptive and Sentimental Novel Interspersed with Pieces of Poetry* (1797) is by an admirer of Lady Marlow named Jacquetta Agneta Mariana Jenks "of Bellegrove Priory in Wales." As the titles indicate, the sentimental novel is Beckford's principal target, though he also mocks the Gothic novel while working in some political satire against the Pitt administration. *Modern Novel Writing* features a typical heroine who falls for a typical hero, and after some typical ups and downs, they marry at the end (though atypically, she gives birth to her first child only six months after the wedding). Beckford not only parodies the gushy rhetoric of sentimental fiction, the tropes, clichés, and inconsequential minutiae of the genre, but also inserts into his novel passages and entire paragraphs from some of its worst offenders. In a tongue-in-cheek afterword addressed to the conservative journal the *British Critic,* the author insists these passages are "not inserted with a design of depreciating their excellence, but merely to display that happy intricacy of style and sentiment without which no novel can have a just claim to your notice and approbation."[344] Most are from deservedly forgotten novels like Cassandra Hawke's *Julia de Gramont*, Ann Radcliffe's *Castles of Athlin and Dunbayne*, Mary Robinson's *Vancenza*, and Elizabeth Hervey's *Melissa and Marcia* (all published between 1788 and 1792), but he mocks better novels as well, including the attempted rape scene from *Pamela*, the Man of the Hill episode in *Tom Jones*, and several passages from Smith's *Celestina*.

Beckford's own goofy prose is best (reminiscent of the late Gilbert Sorrentino's parodies of pop fiction), as "when Arabella instantly called to mind the excellence of her Henry, and seizing Margaret Grimes by the hair with great energy, vowed eternal fidelity to him" (2.13). It gets surrealistic when a guilty aristocrat goes into a frenzy: "he had jumped out of bed and bruised himself dreadfully against the walls of the room—'To drive away,' as he said, 'a salamander that was playing on the harpsichord; look,' cried he, 'look at that pelican, how it smiles upon the imps of darkness—they chain the sun to a coal tub—what a world it is, who can tell but it may be given to me, for my library is full of jackals, and virtue is a mere carpet—murder, war, murder cannot go unpunished' " (2.4). Surprisingly, as Gemmet notes in his introduction, the *British Critic* gave it a fair evaluation, calling it "a very humorous and successful, though somewhat overcharged, attack on modern novel-writing" (31).

Azemia likewise satirizes sentimental and Gothic novels, but, unlike *Modern Novel Writing*, it is less a pastiche of stock scenes and sentiments than a throwback to the self-conscious comic novels of the 1750s. Azemia is the name of a Turkish harem girl who is kidnapped and taken by sea to England; while en route, she and a British seaman named Charles Arnold fall in love, but they are separated when they reach England, where Azemia is abducted again and passes through the hands of various conniving men and protective women until she is rescued 14 months later by Arnold, who marries her soon after. The novel purports to be the maiden effort of a young lady living in the Welsh boondocks whose knowledge of the world is limited to what she's read in popular fiction. She often includes parenthetical asides to show how respectfully she's following the example of other "novel-makers," as in "The moon (which, in all the most celebrated novels lately published, shines every night in the most accommodating manner in the world) . . ." and "One day (to use the style, brief and simple, of an admirable novelist whom I am proud to imitate), the following conversation took place."[345] (Sorrentino again comes to mind, especially during the long alphabetical list of occupations in 2.7, which is where the denigrating "novel-makers" rather than "novelists" appears.) Miss Jenks inserts a long ghost story in the middle of the novel because "readers seem tired of all representations of actual life" (1.10), and though initially she

resists writing the expected abduction scene after a masquerade (for "Nothing is so enchanting as novelty—from its name it must, of course, be the soul of a novel" [2.8]), she dutifully includes one later because it is "a circumstance which is hardly omitted in any novel since the confinement of Pamela at Mr. B—'s house in Lincolnshire, and the *enlèvement* of Miss Byron by Sir Hargrave Pollexfen" (2.11)—one of several digs at Richardson for starting this whole sentimental trend. (Beckford has kinder things to say about Fielding, Sterne, Smollett, and the authors of *Martinus Scriblerus*.) There are fewer passages lifted from bad novels than in *Modern Novel Writing*, though Beckford finds other ways to insult their authors. Once again, Robinson, Hawke, and Radcliffe feel the lash of satire, as do Frances Burney (whose pompous preface to *Camilla* is parodied in Beckford's "Exordium Extraordinary"), Seward's *Louisa*, Williams's *Julia*, Susannah Gunning's *Memoirs of Mary* (1793), and especially a Fielding-wannabe named Richard Cumberland, author of a *Tom Jones* knockoff called *Henry* (1795). Quite a few poets and other writers of the period are roasted as well.[346] After concluding her novel by advertising for a husband ("some tender yet sensible youth who would be content with rural felicity in an elegant cottage in Wales"), Miss Jenks adds a letter to reviewers, not only to explain how she wrote her novel, but also to furnish examples of the reviews she hopes to receive, each a parody of the style of the leading journals of the day.

When Beckford reprinted the novel in 1798, he changed the subtitle of *Azemia* to *a Novel Containing Imitations of the Manner, Both in Prose and Verse, of Many of the Authors of the Present Day, with Political Strictures.* These "political strictures" are much more pronounced in *Azemia* than in its predecessor, and are, his modern editor suggests, the main reason Beckford wrote it: "An astute observer of the shifting trends in Europe and England, Beckford perceived the rage for sentimental romances in his own country as absurdly escapist at a time when reason and common sense were called for to address the hard realities of war, poverty and political oppression that were traumatizing England in the 1790s" (viii). In this regard, *Azemia* recalls satirical novels of the 1730s such as Madden's *Memoirs of the Twentieth Century* and Haywood's *Adventures of Eovaai*, with their stinging attacks on Walpole transfered to Pitt. Even Voltaire occasionally comes to

mind. While brilliantly demonstrating how bad novels are written, Beckford managed to write a rather good one, certainly one that can be read today with greater pleasure and enlightenment than any of the novels he mocks. They are deservedly forgotten; *Azemia* deserves to be rediscovered.

The finest critifiction of this period was written by a young woman later credited with leading the British novel out of the wilderness of mediocrity: Jane Austen (1775–1817). Though not published until 1817, *Northanger Abbey* was mostly written in 1798 and 1799 in response to the novels of the 1790s, so it makes a fitting close to this chapter.[347] Even as a teenager, Austen knew the commercial fiction of her day was ludicrous; at age 15 she wrote an epistolary novella misspelled *Love and Freindship* that, like Beckford's *Modern Novel Writing*, satirizes sentimental fiction by exposing its clichéd plots, theatrical gestures, and its overwrought diction—what the adult Austen called "novel slang."[348] "Base miscreant!" cries its heroine, "how canst thou thus undauntedly endeavour to sully the spotless reputation of such bright excellence?"[349] Most of her juvenilia consists of parodies (not imitations) of pop fiction, and when she began writing *Northanger Abbey* at age 23, she set out not only to satirize Gothic thrillers but to offer a primer on how to write a *realistic* romance novel. As Austen walks us through the story of how an average 17-year-old meets her future husband and, after the usual misunderstandings and obstacles, marries him on the final page, she redefines what a fictional heroine should be by noting what she is *not*. "No one who had ever seen Catherine Morland in her infancy would have supposed her born to be a heroine," the novel begins, and Austen continues to distinguish her from her elder sisters in fiction: her father was *not* a distressed clergyman, was *not* handsome, "and was not in the least addicted to locking up his daughters." Her mother did *not* die during childbirth, Catherine was *not* beautiful and talented as a girl (was in fact a rambunctious tomboy), and is *not* particularly bright. Not your stereotypical heroine then, though inadvertently "from fifteen to seventeen she was in training for a heroine" by reading. She's now at the stereotypical age when a heroine meets her hero, but standard-issue romance heroes are scarce in the Morlands' rural neighborhood: "There was not one family among their acquaintance who had reared and supported a boy accidentally found at their door—not one young man whose origin was unknown. . . ."

The narrator wryly comments "Something must and will happen to throw a hero in her way," and thus sends Catherine and some family friends to Bath, which most British novel heroines seem to visit during their storybook careers.

There she meets her future husband, a 26-year-old clergyman named Henry Tilney, who is as unlike the stereotypical romance protagonist as Catherine is. Witty, casual, open-minded (and familiar enough with ladies' fashions that one initially suspects he's gay), Tilney represents a new kind of fictional hero, for he falls for Catherine not because of her peerless beauty, immense wealth, or virtuous concealment of her feelings for him—for "a celebrated writer" (Richardson) insists "that no young lady can be justified in falling in love before the gentleman's love is declared" (1.3). Instead, the narrator tells us at the end, "his affection originated in nothing better than gratitude, or, in other words, that a persuasion of her partiality for him had been the only cause of giving her a serious thought. It is a new circumstance in romance, I acknowledge," the narrator apologizes tongue-in-cheekily, "and dreadfully derogatory of an heroine's dignity; but if it be as new in common life, the credit of a wild imagination will at least be all my own" (2.15).

Like Fielding—whose fiction was too coarse for her taste, hence the belittling allusion to *Tom Jones* earlier ("a boy accidentally found at their door")—Austen was self-consciously creating a "new species of writing" with a new species of character, taken from "common life" rather than from the pages of older novels. After "chatting some time on such matters as *naturally* arose from the objects around them" (1.3, my italics), Tilney jokingly pretends to converse with Catherine in the stiffly *unnatural* style of a romance hero, and throughout the novel Austen opposes the heroic and unnatural with the common and natural. "Feelings rather natural than heroic possessed" (1.12) Catherine until she meets a 21-year-old airhead named Isabella Thorpe, who introduces her to the Gothic novel at Bath. After Catherine finishes Radcliffe's *Mysteries of Udolpho*, she suggests they read *The Italian* together, and hands Catherine a list of seven more Gothic titles worth reading,[350] which she assures her credulous friend are all wonderfully "horrid." (Isabella uses the same adjective to describe *Sir Charles Grandison*, but in a negative way.) As though under the influence

of a drug, Catherine's vision is distorted by these perfervid novels, so when she has the opportunity to visit Henry's home at Northanger Abbey, she thrills to the idea of a haunted castle "just like what one reads about." On the way there, he teases her about the Gothic trappings she apparently expects to see, describing the typical contents of a Gothic novel so accurately that Catherine metafictionally exclaims, "This is just like a book!" (2.5). Once there, she begins obsessing and acting like a Gothic heroine, suspecting Henry's father of murdering his wife, until Henry sets her straight with a lecture like those given to the book-deluded heroines of *The Mock Clelia* and *The Female Quixote*.[351] "The anxieties of common life began soon to succeed to the alarms of romance" (2.10), and in that simple statement Jane Austen set the agenda for the modern novel, bidding farewell to premodern fiction and making a historic course correction that most literary novelists have followed ever since.

Again like Fielding, Austen frequently comments on her protagonist's progress and discusses "the rules of composition" (2.16) governing romance novels, each time kicking them to the curb. Introducing the permissive family friend with whom Catherine travels to Bath, the narrator sarcastically describes how, contrary to guardians in old-fashioned novels, she will *not* act in her new-fashioned one: "It is now expedient to give some description of Mrs. Allen, that the reader may be able to judge in what manner her actions will hereafter tend to promote the general distress of the work, and how she will probably contribute to reduce poor Catherine to all the desperate wretchedness of which a last volume is capable—whether by her imprudence, vulgarity, or jealousy—whether by intercepting her letters, ruining her character, or turning her out of doors" (1.2). The narrator is content with a thumbnail sketch of Isabella Thorpe's family, mocking earlier novelists' tendency (like Lee in *The Recess*) to elaborate needlessly: "This brief account of the family is intended to supersede the necessity of a long and minute detail from Mrs. Thorpe herself of her past adventures and sufferings, which might otherwise be expected to occupy the three or four following chapters, in which the worthlessness of lords and attorneys might be set forth, and conversations, which has passed twenty years before, be minutely repeated" (1.4). When the narrative reaches the point a few pages from the end when the future of Catherine and Henry's marriage depends

on the permission of the latter's father, the narrator jokes about the lack of suspense, for we all know how this game is played: "The anxiety, which in this state of their attachment must be the portion of Henry and Catherine, and of all who loved either, as to its final event, can hardly extend, I fear, to the bosom of my readers, who will see in the tell-tale compression of the pages before them that we are all hastening together to perfect felicity" (2.16).[352]

This is a novel about reading the world as well as novels, addressed to novel-readers; and just as Tilney advises Catherine to analyze events not by way of bad novels but by "consult[ing] your own understanding, your own sense of the probable, your own observation of what is passing around you" (2.10), Austen hopes her readers will abandon silly, misleading fiction for the more intelligent, reliable type that she wrote, which is based on the probable and on sharp observation of what was passing around her. Characters in *Northanger Abbey* can be judged not only by the novels they read, but by how and why they read them: Isabella reads Gothic novels for cheap thrills, while Catherine takes them too literally. Even after Tilney's lecture, she allows that while Gothic thrillers don't accurately represent life in central England, "Of the Alps and Pyrenees, with their pine forests and their vices, they might give a faithful delineation; and Italy, Switzerland, and the south of France might be as fruitful in horrors as they were there represented" (2.10). Isabella's doltish brother John boasts "I never read novels; I have something else to do," adding: "Novels are all so full of nonsense and stuff; there has not been a tolerably decent one come out since *Tom Jones*, except *The Monk*; I read that t'other day, but as for all the others, they are the stupidest things in creation" (1.7). As though in response, Tilney asserts, "The person, be it gentleman or lady, who has not pleasure in a good novel must be intolerably stupid" (1.14). He has read far more novels than Catherine has, including a suspicious amount of women's fiction—"Do not imagine that you can cope with me in a knowledge of Julias and Louisas"—and it is implied that he can not only distinguish the good from the bad (including Radcliffe's thrillers, which are certainly better than those of her imitators), but that he reads for aesthetic "pleasure"—not for cheap thrills, not for literal reports of malevolence in the world, nor for sexual titillation (which is apparently John's motive). A reader who begins

Northanger Abbey with the expectations of a Catherine or Isabella should finish it with the informed appreciation of a Tilney—or so Austen hoped—and an appreciation not only of *Northanger Abbey* but of good novels in general.

Unlike Beckford, who didn't have a stake in the novel and thus was content to mock it from the sidelines, Austen wanted to correct it and defend it from detractors. Writing was her vocation, her life, and she resented the insulting condescension shown to novels by reviewers and even by some fellow novelists. (Austen owned a copy of Bage's *Hermsprong*, in which a character who is reluctantly thinking of writing a novel says "novels are now pretty generally considered as the lowest of all human productions" [1.14].) This is the motive behind the most famous passage in *Northanger Abbey*, a superb defense of the novel as a major art form, and a stinging attack on those who denigrate it in favor of tenth-rate nonfiction and secondhand anthologies. Austen limits her examples of good fiction to the novels a "young lady" might read, but her defense is a St. Crispin's Day celebration of what the best British novelists had accomplished by the end of the 18th century. On rainy days, Catherine and Isabella read novels together:

> Yes, novels; for I will not adopt that ungenerous and impolitic custom so common with novel-writers of degrading by their contemptuous censure the very performances to the number of which they are themselves adding—joining with their greatest enemies in bestowing the harshest epithets on such works, and scarcely ever permitting them to be read by their own heroine, who, if she accidentally take up a novel, is sure to turn over its insipid pages with disgust. Alas! if the heroine of one novel be not patronized by the heroine of another, from whom can she expect protection and regard? I cannot approve of it. Let us leave it to the reviewers to abuse such effusions of fancy at their leisure, and over every new novel to talk in threadbare strains of the trash with which the press now groans. Let us not desert one another; we are an injured body. Although our productions have afforded more extensive and unaffected pleasure than those of any other literary corporation in the world, no species of composition has been so much decried. From pride, ignorance, or fashion, our foes are almost as many as our readers. And while the

> abilities of the nine-hundredth abridger of *The History of England*, or of the man who collects and publishes in a volume some dozen lines of Milton, Pope, and Prior, with a paper from the *Spectator*, and a chapter from Sterne, are eulogized by a thousand pens—there seems almost a general wish of decrying the capacity and undervaluing the labour of the novelist, and of slighting the performances which have only genius, wit, and taste to recommend them. "I am no novel-reader—I seldom look into novels—Do not imagine that *I* often read novels—It is really very well for a novel." Such is the common cant. "And what are you reading, Miss —?" "Oh! it is only a novel!" replies the young lady, while she lays down her book with affected indifference, or momentary shame. "It is only *Cecilia*, or *Camilla*, or *Belinda*"; or, in short, only some work in which the greatest powers of the mind are displayed, in which the most thorough knowledge of human nature, the happiest delineation of its varieties, the liveliest effusions of wit and humour, are conveyed to the world in the best chosen language. (5)

Reader, I'd marry her.

Notes

1 John Buxton (1963), quoted in Salzman's *English Prose Fiction 1558–1700* (123), the best introductory book on the period. I'm surprised (but chuffed) to learn *Arcadia* was more popular than *The Pilgrim's Progress* or the Bible.

2 Page 20 in Zall's edition of *A Nest of Ninnies and Other English Jestbooks*, where Armin's novella occupies pp. 15–71.

3 *A Nest of Ninnies* is also the title of a novel by the American poets John Ashbery and James Schuyler (1969), but it has nothing to do with Armin's novella (aside from its comic spirit). Ashbery said he simply noticed the title in a bookseller's catalogue and decided to use it.

4 Chapter 3 in Horsman's old-spelling edition, hereafter cited by chapter.

5 The novelette occupies pp. 4–42 of Mish's *Anchor Anthology of Short Fiction of the Seventeenth Century*, and will be hereafter cited by chapter.

6 Walter R. Davis, 192. He relates it to a supernatural Elizabethan novel called *The Adventures of Lady Egeria* (1585?) by "W. C." It sounds fascinating, and had I known of it I would have written about it in my earlier volume.

7 Page 56 in Mish's *Anthology of Short Fiction*, where *Moriomachia* occupies pp. 46–78. Anton also adds a number of wry footnotes that similarly deflate the high diction of the text.

8 Randall and Boswell, *Cervantes in Seventeenth-Century England*, xxxvi —a stupendous reference work.

9 Part 2, p. 3v, hereafter cited by part/page number: only the rectos (right-hand pages) are paginated, so I'll use r for recto and v for verso.

10 How successful he was is hard to say. Nearly 30 copies of *Urania* survive, not bad for an early 17th-century novel: only a copy or two are extant of all the other English novels I've discussed so far.

11 For an attractively written account of this aspect of Wroth's novel and her familiarity with the intellectual debates of her day, see Cavanagh's *Cherished Torment*.

12 Part 1, page 1; hereafter cited by part/page.

13 "A mighty number of lights appeared in the sky, a strange-formed and built castle appearing in the midst of those lights, and in the castle a most stately tomb. . . . It came at the first extremely high; when nearer the city, it stripped the lights of that brightness and glory, as it was impossible to describe the extreme luster of them; then came lower, and so by degrees descended and settled in the middest of a most pleasant and delectable grove . . ." (2:318).

14 Dude, I flagged the pages for you: 1:84, 87, 197–98, 216, 284, 657; 2:237, 328, 371.

15 My old anthology from college, Witherspoon and Warnke's *Seventeenth-Century Prose and Poetry*, includes only one woman in its 1,094 pages: not Wroth but Katherine Philips (1631–64), who is permitted one poem near the end.

16 Page 653 in Baker's edition of Sidney's *Arcadia*, where the *Sixth Book* occupies pp. 631–78. Beling is sometimes confused with Irishman Richard Bellings, who, born in 1613, was too young to write this.

17 See the introduction to Cullen's splendid modern edition for what little is known of her.

18 No condescension intended, by the way, toward Miss Weamys with the phrase "paper dolls": in a reductively literal sense, isn't that what all literary characters are?

19 Page 75 in Butler's edition, where the novella occupies pp. 69–114 (following an exhaustive introduction that is longer than the novella itself).

20 As Knowlson pointed out back when I was in high school, this is merely a cipher in which letters of the alphabet are assigned a note in the musical scale; a few cryptologists of the period toyed with this notion.

21 Pages 420–21 in Mish's *Anchor Anthology*, where the novella occupies pp. 368–421.

22 Henry D. Janzen's introduction to his well-annotated edition, 11; the novel itself will be cited by chapter. By "novel," Janzen, like many conservative critics, means realistic fiction; by now it should be obvious I consider any book-length fiction a novel, regardless of its degree of realism.

23 Dodona's Grove was an ancient Greek oracle where priests and priestesses conned their marks by pretending to interpret the rustling of the leaves.

24 See chap. 1 of *The Origins of the English Novel*. McKeon doesn't actually discuss *Dodona's Grove* or *Amandus and Sophronia*—or, for that matter, any of the English novels I've treated so far. Nor does Patrick Parrinder in his more recent *Nation & Novel*, where he writes, "the seventeenth century is largely a missing chapter in the history of the English novel" (44).

25 Hyder Rollins, who reviews his varied output in what seems to be the only essay ever written on Sheppard, guesses he lived from around 1624 to 1655, the last year anything was heard of him.

26 Although the collected edition of 1676 is about 730 pages long, it's an oversize volume with tiny print; a modern setting would be closer to 1,000 pages.

27 This preface was omitted from the complete 1676 edition I, but it is reprinted in Davies's *Prefaces to Four Seventeenth-Century Romances*. For a credible prediction of how *Parthenissa* would have ended, see C. William Miller (1947).

28 Page 143 in Moore Smith's edition. Osborne's intelligent comments on the fiction of her day, especially on French novels (which she read in the original—she had a low opinion of the English translations), are a valuable resource.

29 Indeed, his brother Robert "discovered striking resemblance's between [Boyle]'s conquests for Cromwell in Munster and the martial exploits of Parthenissa's gallant lover Artabanes" (Lynch, 188).

30 See Potter's *Secret Rites and Secret Writing: Royalist Literature, 1641–1660*.

31 On the basis of one slim piece of evidence, the novel has been attributed to the otherwise unknown William Sales, but the modern editor of *Theophania* (whose well-annotated edition will be cited by page number) prefers to regard the author as anonymous.

32 Kahn discusses this aspect of *Theophania* in her superb essay on the English political romance genre, "Reinventing Romance," 652–54.

33 Salzman, 157; Smith, 237; Kahn, 638. Only a few other critics have written about this magisterial novel, largely because it has been out of print since the 17th century. (Even its author was unknown until the 1980s.) Salzman reprints the novel's preface and opening pages in his *Anthology of Seventeenth-Century Fiction* (211–47).

34 Page 73, one of many labyrinth images. *The Princess Cloria* is 614 pages long, but as with *Parthenissa*, the page count is deceptive: the second edition (1665) I read is a huge (7" × 11") folio averaging 700 words per page: a modern setting would be close to 1,000 pages.

35 That's the title of Christopher Hill's classic book on the English Civil War and its effect on the lower classes, which is useful as a corrective to Sir Percy's aristocratic view. It's a shame that apparently none of the Levelers, Ranters, Diggers, or Seekers that Hill describes wrote a novel giving *their* take on the times. (In *Cloria*, these people are dismissed as "the rabble.")

36 Page 212 in Salzman's anthology (which I'm citing because more accessible), where the prefatory "To the Reader" occupies pp. 211–16.

37 The first two parts of the novel were published in 1653 and 1654 as *Cloria and Narcissus* while Cromwell was still in power, and were allowed to be published, Patterson suggests, because "The text would have been either inscrutable to Cromwell's censors, or sufficiently

oblique to avoid direct confrontation" (192). Cromwell, by the way, appears as "Hercrombrotus" in *Cloria* and is treated with considerable contempt.

38 To keep things in perspective, even the best English novels of the 17th century are inferior to the best poems, plays, and creative nonfiction (like Burton's *Anatomy*) produced then. The novel wouldn't surpass these genres until the following century.

39 Boyce, 489. I may be undervaluating *Panthalia*; for more sympathetic readings, see Boyce's pioneering essay (which includes a character key), Patterson (198–202), and Kahn (638–46).

40 Sir Thomas Browne, best known for *Religio Medici* (1643), and Walter Charleton, author of many books published from 1650 onward, including a novelette, *The Ephesian Matron* (1659). Mackenzie is hardly one to criticize others for using pedantic terms.

41 In what is undoubtedly the obscurest literary allusion in television history, *Seinfeld*'s George Costanza once said he liked Flatman's poetry. *Montelyon, Knight of the Oracle* is a popular chivalric romance by Emanuel Ford (c. 1600).

42 Page 12 of Jack and Lyall's introduction. *The Jewel* itself occupies pp. 49–213, set in a cushion of commentary. On the errata page, the author insists the title was to have been spelled as I have it above, not the typesetter's *Ekskubalauron*, a neologism signifying "out of dung, a jewel."

43 visotactile = involving both sight and touch; visuriency = desire to look; tacturiency = desire to touch; attrectation = touching with hands; hirquitalliency = cry of delight; gnomon = pointer on a sundial; obscoeness = obscenity; *definitiones logicae verificantur in rebus* = logical definitions are verified by objects; exerced = exercised; suppones = anticipates.

44 Mish, "English Short Fiction in the Seventeenth Century," 257. This 100-page essay provides a valuable overview of all the novelettes and novellas published that century.

45 Whitaker, *Mad Madge*, 193, which goes on to give an inviting overview of the collection.

46 Page 5 in Lilley's edition of *The Blazing World and Other Writings*, where *A Contract* occupies pp. 3–43.

47 Page 47 in Lilley's edition, where the novella occupies pp. 77–118. See Genesis 34 for the rape; as Lilley notes, "Dinah's brothers, Simeon and Levi, avenge her rape in a massacre which led indirectly to the foundation of Israel" (226), another grim allegory.

48 *Nature's Pictures* contains another novella, *The She-Anchoret*, of which Cavendish was particularly proud. A precocious young lady retires from the world after her father's death, but her reputation for wisdom attracts many visitors, and the bulk of the novella consists of their Q&A sessions. Threatened by a king's marriage proposal, she commits suicide at the end. As a platform for Cavendish's views, *The She-Anchoret* is impressive in its encyclopedic sweep, but as fiction it's static.

49 Page 167 in Lilley's edition, where the novel occupies pp. 119–225.

50 Each time the popular novel was reprinted, it was given a new title: the second printing of 1656 is called *Wit and Fancy in a Maze*, and this 1660 edition—"printed for the author" and thus perhaps reflecting his preferred title, is called *Romancio-Mastrix; or, A Romance on Romances*. When the novel was reprinted in 1719 (by which time Holland was probably dead), the publisher renamed it *The Spaniard*, and pretended it was translated not from British to English, as Holland playfully had it, but from Spanish to English.

51 "These torments must needs be inpressible," the commentator sympathizes from the sidelines.

52 Page 3 in Todd and Spearing's *Counterfeit Ladies*, where the novella occupies pp. 1–73. The diction is so slangy and allusive that the editors append 415 notes to the slim work.

53 Richard Johnson's popular *Seven Champions of Christendom* (1596) relates how St. George rescued other Christian heroes from enchantment. It is available in Simons's *Guy of Warwick and Other Chapbook Romances*, 79–94.

54 Page 88 in *Counterfeit Ladies*, where the novella occupies pp. 77–130. "Adblandiments" is a word she makes up to sound sophisticated.

55 Pages 22–37 in Peterson's anthology (where *The Counterfeit Lady* occupies pp. 8–102), equivalent to pp. 93–108 of the earlier novella.

56 Though as Salzman points out, the licensors were more concerned with religious and political heterodoxy than with obscenity. In a 1982 essay

he prints most of the naughty bits from the rare and inaccessible first printing.

57 Literally: Moseley details the passages from Mandeville that Head adapted, and suggests he added this section to take advantage of the popularity of exotic travel books.

58 Chapter 76 in the expanded edition of 1680, the earliest available (and hereafter cited by chapter). The first printing consisted of 50 chapters, but more material was added to it as the popular book was reprinted over the years.

59 *Factual Fictions* (125), though Davis pushes this too far when he goes on to suggest, "There seems to have been something inherently novelistic about the criminal, or rather the form of the novel seems almost to demand a criminal content. Indeed, without the appearance of the whore, the rogue, the cutpurse, the cheat, the thief, or the outsider it would be impossible to imagine the genre of the novel" (125).

60 Salzman calls it an autobiography but lists it in his bibliography under "Picaresque Fiction." Cited by chapter.

61 Cynthia Wall's splendid Norton Critical Edition, x.

62 Page xlii in Forrest and Sharrock's 1988 edition, hereafter cited by page number.

63 Page 351 in Salzman's *Anthology of Seventeenth-Century Fiction*, where the novel occupies pp. 351–445. It also appears in Peterson's *Counterfeit Lady Unveiled* (185–289), preceded by an informative account of Dangerfield's conspiratorial activities.

64 Cf. Balzac's remark in *Le Père Goriot*: "Behind great fortunes with no obvious source is some forgotten, well-executed crime."

65 Page 41 in Hinnant's recent critical edition, where he lays to rest the mistake made by some (including the Library of Congress) that *The London Jilt* was written by Alexander Oldys, whose 1692 novel *The Female Gallant* was misleadingly subtitled *The London Jilt*. In fact, *The London Jilt* is an adaptation of a Dutch novel published in 1680–81 entitled *D'Openhertige Juffrouw* (The Outspoken Damsel), as Lotte van de Pol recently revealed in *The Burgher and the Whore* (10–12). However, *The London Jilt* is so throughly Anglicized with British place-names and politics that it deserves treatment here. At this time, "jilt" meant not someone left at the altar, but a prostitute, and/or a woman (in

or out of the profession) who flirtatiously offered more than she delivered.

66 In *The Bawdy Politic in Stuart England*, Mowry detects a political subtext (46–47, 118–19), another way the author shifts our focus from the *Jilt*'s body to her brain.

67 To keep things moving, I'm skipping over some minor novels of the the period that the curious reader may want to look into: The anonymous *Don Samuel Crispe* (1660) is a facetious romance with several references to *Don Quixote* (see Randall and Boswell, 230–33). Nathaniel Ingelo's religious allegory *Bentivolio and Urania* (1660–64) is notable only for its pedantic preface, in which the clergyman denounces the authors of secular romances whose "chief design is to put fleshly lust into long stories" and offers a Christian alternative, which Stevenson dismisses as "a superlatively tedious romance" (36). In John Bulteel's preface to his *Birinthia* (1664)—and it's interesting that, at this late date, authors are still arguing about what a romance should be—he boasts that his romance is more realistic than others because "this is a romance accommodated to history" (quoted by Stevenson, 36), and though the result is negligible, it is part of a trend: John Crowne's *Pandion and Amphigenia* (1665) is an incongruous mix of high romance and low comedy; see Salzman (282–84), who argues that novels like it and Sheppard's *Amandus and Sophronia* (which we looked at earlier) are "part of the development of anti-romantic impulses that led to the [realistic] Restoration novel" (284). Henry Neville's *Isle of Pines* (1668) is too short to be considered even a novella, but it contributed to the desert-island genre that includes Grimmelshausen's *Continuation* (as noted earlier) and *Robinson Crusoe*. Instead of a man Friday, George Pine is shipwrecked with four women, whose propagative activities earned *The Isle of Pines* the distinction of being the first work of fiction to be banned in Boston: someone there probably noticed that "Pines" is an anagram for "Penis." (It stretches from pp. 187–212 in Bruce's *Three Early Modern Utopias*, cited earlier.) And for further Restoration crime novels, shoplift Peterson's *The Counterfeit Lady Unveiled and Other Criminal Fiction of Seventeenth-Century England.*

68 Page 27 in Todd's critical edition, hereafter cited by page. The novel pretends to be a translation of *L'Intrigue de Philander & Silvia*, set in

France a century earlier, but no key was necessary because everyone knew who it was about.

69 See Gardiner; even though I obviously disagree with that designation, her essay is an informative account of how and why Behn got lost in canon formation. For example, Ian Watt, who didn't get a rise from her novels, refers to Behn only in passing.

70 As though to disassociate herself from Oroonoko's blasphemous remarks, Behn praises the Catholicism of her dedicatee. Politically a Catholic, Behn was a freethinker "approaching what the seventeenth-century termed 'atheism,' " according to Todd (*The Secret Life of Aphra Behn*, 292).

71 *Seductive Forms*, 82–83, from a wonderfully insightful chapter on Behn's work.

72 This might refer to two other novellas by Behn, *The Fair Jilt* (1688) and *The Story of the Nun* (1689), the protagonists of which are corrupt and murderous.

73 See Spengemann; like Gardiner, he has interesting things to say about canon formation. To him *Oroonoko* "seems now, for all its stumbling oddity, to anticipate the whole subsequent history of English fiction" (390).

74 "English Short Fiction in the Seventeenth Century," 299. Not surprisingly, the novel was later converted into a play entitled *She Ventures and He Wins* (1695) by the pseudonymous "Ariadne."

75 John Dod and Robert Cleaver were early 17th-century theologians. There is a similar mashup of the sacred and profane later when a character needs a piece of paper and "his hostess was forced to tear a blank leaf out of *The Practice of Piety* or some such book; or, for aught I know, it might as well be torn out of *The Famous History of Valentine and Orson*, which indeed is the most likely of the two" (93).

76 The page numbers are misnumbered at this point, which furthers the novel's resemblance to *Tristram Shandy*, though they are probably printing errors rather than deliberate disruptions.

77 That is, in the Protestant, financial district of London.

78 See Principe's essay for more on the origin of Boyle's novel and its place in his thinking.

79 The original *Theodora* wasn't discovered until 1994 and was published in 2000 in volume 13 of Boyle's *Works* (5–41). The 1687 revision appears in volume 11 (5–76) and will be cited by page number.

80 Boswell's *Life of Samuel Johnson*, 194.

81 Page 56 of the preliminaries, in Larsen's invaluable critical edition (unfortunately available only as a dissertation). The body of the novel will be cited by volume/chapter.

82 Frenchman Jacques Gaffarel (1601–81) wrote a book called *Unheard-of Curiosities*; the Swiss physician Paracelsus (1492–1541) wrote about alchemy and other metaphysical matters.

83 Admittedly, this had become a commonplace by Dunton's time; cf. Bunyan's Sunday-school doggerel: "Hard texts are nuts (I will not call them cheaters),/Whose shells do keep their kernels from the eaters;/Ope then the shells, and you shall have the meat,/They here are brought, for you to crack and eat" (*The Pilgrims's Progress*, part 2, 206).

84 Dunton acknowledges this is based on a couplet by Abraham Cowley (1618–67), whom he admired and often quotes.

85 The same Howell who wrote *Dodona's Grove*.

86 The similarities between the *Voyage* and *Tristram Shandy* are so obvious that after the publication of the first volumes of Sterne's novel, one bandwagon-jumping publisher reissued volume 1 of Dunton's novel as *The Life, Travels, and Adventures of Christopher Wagstaff, Gentleman, Grandfather to Tristram Shandy* (1762).

87 Dunton stole this from Head's *English Rogue*, substituting "author" for "rogue" and thereby conflating the two occupations.

88 From *The Pilgrim's Guide from the Cradle to the Grave* (1684), attributed to his father but probably written by Dunton himself, quoted on pp. xix–xx of Larsen's introduction.

89 The clearest reproduction of this is on p. 160 of Ord's *Travel and Experience in Early Modern English Literature*.

90 For more on this fascinating novel, see chapter 1 of Sherbert's *Menippean Satire and the Poetics of Wit* and chapter 5 of Ord's book cited above.

91 This minor French novelist (1647?–1720) also wrote a fairytale collection with the rather postmod title *Contes moins contes que les autres* (Stories Less Storylike than Others, 1698). Many of Préchet's

conventional novellas were translated into English, but neither this one nor *La Valize ouverte*.

92 Nonetheless, Gildon's book was popular enough that another publisher brought out an abridged edition in 1706, and Gildon published a sequel in 1719 entitled *The Postman Robbed of His Mail*, which contains a novella entitled *The Lover's Sighs* amidst miscellaneous letter-essays.

93 Page 5 in the Hesperus edition. The novella is also available in Salzman's *Anthology* (473–525).

94 Written 1740–41?, quoted in McDermott's *Novel and Romance*, 126. He discusses this issue at length w/r/t Congreve's *short* novel.

95 Congreve owned two copies of his *Comical Romance* (as it was translated, not *Novel*), and in his first play, *The Old Bachelor* (1693), a character calls "Scarron's novels my prayer-book" (4.6).

96 By "literary" I'm excluding pulp fictions like *The Irish Rogue; or, The Comical History of Teague O'Divelly* (1690) and *The Wild-Irish Captain* (1692). I will be citing Ross and Markey's model scholarly edition of *Vertue Rewarded*. (And keep the title in mind when we reach Richardson's *Pamela*.)

97 End of letter 1 in Kelley's facsimile edition, hereafter cited by letter. (She reprints the original 1693 version; the 1718 edition was attractively retitled *Olinda's Adventures*, and is also available in a facsimile edition with a good introduction by Robert Adams Day.) Most sources spell Trotter's first name Catherine, but Kelley opts for Catharine, and she's the expert. (She has also written a biography of this amazing prodigy who later wrote plays—tutored by Congreve—and a book on Locke's *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* [1690], which resulted a letter of thanks from the philosopher.) Kelley also notes there is some evidence that Trotter may have been born in 1674 rather than 1679, making her 19 when she published her novel, which is still impressive.

98 Page xii of her introduction to the facsimile edition I've been quoting.

99 See Levine (217–27) on the similarities between *Pale Fire* and *A Tale of a Tub*.

100 Donoghue, 1–2. Including *Gulliver's Travels* in his dismissal of Swift as a novelist, Donoghue finds "that he is careless, casual, if Jamesian standards are recalled" (2). But why not measure him by Rabelaisian

standards, or Petronian, Sternean, or Joycean standards, not to mention Cao Xueqinean? Who made James the gold standard?

101 It wasn't always so: its first readers regarded it as fiction, and a character in Clara Reeve's *Progress of Romance* (1785) doesn't hesitate to put the *Tale* at the top of her "list of novels and stories original and uncommon" (evening 11).

102 Further parallels are noted by Stedmond in "Another Possible Analogue for Swift's *Tale of a Tub*" (1957).

103 An opportunistic writer/bookseller like Dunton is who, author of such publications as *The Double Life, or A New Project to Redeem the Time by Living over Tomorrow before It Comes*; *The Funeral of Mankind: A Paradox Proving We Are All Dead and Buried*; and *The Spiritual Hedgehog, a Project (or Thought) Wholly New and Surprising* (Hunter, 104–5). Dunton published one of Swift's earliest poems in his journal, the *Athenian Mercury*, which may or may not be a satire; Hunter suggests that Swift "got revenge in an elaborate attack on Dunton in *A Tale of a Tub*," adding "The historical Dunton bears a lot of the features of the Tale-teller, and if the figure is a composite (as seems most likely), Dunton was almost certainly one of the models. Certainly, he is a more significant presence in the *Tale* than he has usually been recognized to be" (13, 358n12).

104 The opinions of Claude Rawson and Gardner Stout, respectively, quoted on pp. lii–iii of Marcus Walsh's introduction to his superb new critical edition of the *Tale*, hereafter cited by page number. Both Rawson and Stout were responding to John Clark's *Form and Frenzy in Swift's* Tale of a Tub, which I warmly recommend.

105 He claims he has been a writer "under three reigns" (44), meaning since at least 1665, so if he was say 20 when he began, he'd be at least 52 in 1697.

106 In *Swift's Tory Politics*, Lock writes, "But taken as a whole and in context, his writings reveal a deeply conservative, even reactionary, political thinker" (vii).

107 Cf. Kainophilus's boast "Of the admirable and surprising novelty of both matter and method" in Dunton's *Voyage*, "representing *a book made, as it were, out of nothing*, and yet containing *every thing* . . ."

(2.1, his italics). Dunton also wrote a pamphlet entitled *Nonentity, or A Grave Essay upon Nothing*.

108 By "new" religions Swift of course meant those subsequent to early Christianity, once again forgetting/ignoring/suppressing the fact that Christianity was a "new" religion to the ancients he admires, many of whom regarded it with as much contempt as he heaps on Catholics and Puritans.

109 The solipsistic digressions in the *Tale* may be a friendly swipe at *Incognita*'s narrator, who states "when I digress, I am at that time writing to please myself; when I continue the thread of the story, I write to please [the reader]" (14).

110 Letter 3 in Boyce's modernized edition, cited by letter (and his introduction by page number).

111 An earlier book, David Russen's *Iter Lunare; or, A Voyage to the Moon* (1703), is described as a "Whimsical Utopian romance" in Letellier's checklist of early 18th-century fiction, but it's not: it is a speculative, 17,500-word *essay* on part 1 of Cyrano de Bergerac's *Other World*. It's loony of Letellier to include it.

112 For a lengthy discussion of the *Essay*, see chap. 2 of Sherbert's *Menippean Satire and the Poetics of Wit*.

113 See Blackwell's collection of essays, *The Secret Life of Things: Animals, Objects, and It-Narratives in Eighteenth-Century England*. We'll meet a few of them later in this chapter.

114 Manley continued the story in another roman à clef, *Memoirs of Europe* (1710), though she dropped the supernatural frame. An earlier novel was formerly ascribed to her, *The Secret History of Queen Zarah and the Zarazians* (1705), but this is now thought to be written by someone else.

115 Manley collaborated with Swift on some pamphlets between 1710 and 1714; for an account of their relationship, see Rabb's "Swift and the Spider-Woman."

116 A third reason for this subterfuge is given by her publisher, who claims Manley said in a letter to him, "though the world may like what I write of others, they despise whatever an author is thought to say of themselves" (quoted in an appendix to *Rivella*, 117).

117 Page 83 in Bower and Erickson's extensively annotated edition. The novel originally appeared as five pamphlets published between March

and July 1712; they were not collected into book form until 1727.

118 For *The Seven Champions of Christendom*, see n53 above. According to its title page, John Shirley's *London's Glory; or, The History of the Famous and Valiant London 'Prentice* (1686) is "an account of his birth, his brave exploits in his childhood, his coming to London, and being put apprentice to a Turkey merchant; the story of his love to his master's daughter; and how, going for Turkey, he slew a tiger and rescued the Great Turk's daughter; after that, killed two lions prepared to devour him; and, gaining the princess's love, brought her to England, marrying her in great splendour; with many other memorable things, to the honour of the famous city of London and the whole English Nation. Adorned with songs, love letters, and verses"—all in a brisk 20 pages. If interested, you can find it in Mish's *Restoration Prose Fiction*, 236–56.

119 Reported by the ubiquitous Charles Gildon in his "Epistle Dedicatory." Some scholars have attributed the novella to him, but the editors of the recent Four Courts edition consider his authorship highly unlikely.

120 For the last title in particular, see chap. 6 of Fausett's *Strange Surprizing Sources of* Robinson Crusoe.

121 See chap. 5 of Severin's *Seeking Robinson Crusoe*. But Hunter warns us in *The Reluctant Pilgrim* not to put much emphasis on these sources, for Defoe was more interested in writing a religious allegory than a travel/adventure story, something closer to *The Pilgrim's Progress* than to *The Isle of Pines*.

122 See chap. 2 of Starr's *Defoe and Spiritual Autobiography* for an account of this little-known novel, which is way too religious to take seriously. Like Hunter, Starr argues that *Robinson Crusoe* belongs primarily to the genre of spiritual autobiography.

123 *Myself with Others*, p. 64. Comparing Defoe's novel to *Don Quixote*, the Mexican novelist argues that Crusoe is an icon of success while Quixote is an icon of failure.

124 From a 1912 lecture, excerpted in the Norton Critical Edition, 323.

125 Such readers should check out Joseph Campana's essay "Cruising Crusoe: Diving into the Wreck of Sexuality," in Mounsey and Gonda's *Queer People*, 159–79.

126 But for stimulating readings of *Captain Singleton* and *Colonel Jack*, see chaps. 3 and 5 of *Defoe's Narratives* by John Richetti. (He dismisses

Memoirs of a Cavalier as "lumpish.") I had the pleasure of taking a seminar from Dr. Richetti on Swift and Pope at Rutgers in 1985. I remember him as an urbane teacher and a dapper dresser, and now wish I had saved my notes.

127 It's surprising to come across that date on the final page, for Defoe has been describing life in the early 18th century, not life during the English Civil War, when much of the first half of the novel would take place. There are anachronisms as a result, such as the reference on p. 220 to the criminal exploits of James Whitney: this scene occurs when Moll is 60, meaning around 1673; but Whitney was only 13 at the time and had not begun the criminal career that would end with his hanging in 1694.

128 Much is made of young Moll's superior needlework, yet when she's older and needs to make money, she ignores this marketable skill in favor of thievery and prostitution.

129 The equivalent of nearly $200,000 today. The greedy gold-digger isn't satisfied with *that*!? Throughout the novel Moll always has the equivalent of at least $20,000 on hand, making her claims of financial insecurity and poverty ridiculous.

130 Arnold Kettle, "In Defense of *Moll Flanders*" (1964), reprinted in Kelly's Norton Critical Edition, 391. Paula Backscheider says "we cannot dislike her or wish her hanged" (166), though I suspect she'd change her tune if someone had briefly contemplated murdering *her* child after stealing her necklace and then ripped off *her* family heirlooms.

131 See Bjornson's *Picaresque Hero* for a rap sheet on the many ways Moll deflects "the reader's attention from her own culpability" (194).

132 In the appendix to the Norton Critical Edition, there is a vivid description of Newgate entitled *Hell upon Earth* (1705), written by a burglar named John Hall; Moll can't write as well as a fellow criminal?

133 One of the first pieces the gay magazine *Christopher Street* ran on the virus was entitled "Journal of the Plague Year," by the admirable novelist Andrew Holleran (no. 70, March 1983, 15–21).

134 Backscheider provides an excellent account of the relationship between *Roxana* and women's fiction of the day in chap. 7 of her book.

135 Page 45 in *The Galesia Trilogy*, where *Love Intrigues* occupies pp. 1–47.

136 After alluding to *Coke upon Littleton* in *Tom Jones*, Fielding boasts he's the first novelist to cite it "in any but a law-book" (2.6), but Barker beat him to it by 36 years.

137 Quoted in Spencer's *Rise of the Woman Novelist*, 28. "Punk" meant a prostitute up until the 1920s, when it began to acquire its current meaning.

138 You may recall her from chap. 2: she translated Boursault's *Letters from a Lady of Quality*, and unwittingly collaborated with Crébillon on *The Happy Orphans*.

139 Part 3 was published a year after parts 1 and 2, written to cash in on their success, and perhaps should be regarded (and discarded) as a sequel rather than part of the original novel, for part 2 ends on a beautifully bitter note: "Melantha, who was not of a humour to take anything to heart, was married in a short time, and had the good fortune not to be suspected by her husband, though she brought him a child in seven months after her wedding" (159).

140 *Popular Fiction before Richardson*, 207. Richetti's 25-page analysis of *Love in Excess* has been criticized by some for being too harsh and condescending, but it strikes me as just.

141 Page 15 of her introduction to *Masquerade Novels of Eliza Haywood*, where *Idalia* occupies the final 162 pages.

142 The former can be found in *Fantomina and Other Works*, and the latter in Backscheider's edition of Haywood's *Selected Fiction and Drama*.

143 See notes 152 and 204 below.

144 See chap. 5 of Ballaster's *Seductive Forms* for details on this incident along with an interesting analysis of Haywood's writings.

145 Also like Haywood, Aubin translated novels from the French, most surprisingly Challe's *Illustrious French Lovers*, which couldn't be more different from her own novels.

146 Reprinted in Nixon's *Novel Definitions*, 107–9.

147 See Mounsey and Gonda, 246–60. Predictably, Richetti offers a fine if heteronormative assessment of Aubin's work in *Popular Fiction before Richardson*, 216–29.

148 Page 74 in *The Galesia Trilogy*, where the *Screen* occupies pp. 49–173.

149 Page 272 in *The Galesia Trilogy*, where the *Lining* occupies pp. 176–290. Editor Wilson explains that Dykes was "one of the most prominent

compilers of ancient and modern proverbs, accompanied by illustrative tales or fables. Barker appears to have drawn on his explanations in *Good Manners for Schools* (1700), *Moral Reflections upon Select English Proverbs* (1708), and *The Royal Marriage* (1722). She also appears to have consulted *The Fables of Aesop* (1692), compiled by Sir Roger L'Estrange (1616–1704) and Dykes, his assistant at Oxford" (272n1).

150 Rivka Swenson suggests "the political intentionality behind Barker's avant-garde strategies seems similar to that which informed the twentieth-century Expressionist revolt against Realist comfort-food" (74n14).

151 Barker's trilogy anticipates some recent novels that likewise derive their structure from female activities like dressmaking (Karen Elizabeth Gordon's *Red Shoes*), recipe-swapping (Andrea Israel and Nancy Garfinkel's *Recipe Club*), and scrapbooking (Caroline Preston's *Scrapbook of Frankie Pratt*.)

152 In 1725, copycat Eliza Haywood published a novella called *The Tea Table; or, A Conversation between Some Noble Persons of Both Sexes* that imitates the heterogeneous contents of Baker's *Screen* (poems, an inset romantic "novel," proverbs, etc.). See *Fantomina and Other Works*, 73–106. (The same volume contains an epistolary novella entitled *Love Letters on All Occasions* that rips off Gildon's *Postboy Robbed of His Mail*.) I skipped over her second novel, *The British Recluse* (1722), because it too closely resembles Aubin's early novels.

153 Davys's editor, Martha Bowden, compares this to Lady Booby's ephemeral grief in *Joseph Andrews* (1.5), and notes that a "dark room" is where madwomen were confined.

154 Alexander Pope was a subscriber to Davys's first novel, and she apparently returned the compliment by naming the most sensible female character in the *Rake* Belinda, who, like her namesake in "The Rape of the Lock," knows how to play ombre.

155 For a good essay on these and Davys's other novels, see chap. 6 of Schofield's *Masking and Unmasking the Female Mind*, which treats all the major British "amatory" novelists of the 18th century.

156 *The English Novel, 1700–1740*, xix. But he includes in his bibliography *A Voyage to Cacklogallinia* (1727) by Captain Samuel Brunt, which he

annotates “Satire imitative of Swift” (368), along with a number of other titles even I wouldn’t call novels, like Russen’s *Iter Lunare* (see note 111 above.)

157 Maurice Z. Shroder, “The Novel as a Genre” (1963), rpt. in Stevick, 14. Shroder goes on to say *Gulliver’s Travels* belongs to the subspecies of bildungsroman, featuring “protagonists who are incredibly naïve and largely unheroic, which deal in the disillusionments one suffers in trying to apply systems to the unsystematic realities of life” (16).

158 “A Letter from Capt. Gulliver to His Cousin Sympson,” xxxiv; hereafter the novel will be cited by part/chapter.

159 It still inspires imitations: see John Paul Brady’s clever satire of modern Ireland, *A Voyage to Inishneefa: A First-hand Account of the Fifth Voyage of Lemuel Gulliver* (1987).

160 Chapter 16 in Kerby-Miller’s stupendous critical edition; the novel is cited by chapter, his apparatus by page number. (Since this edition is hard to come by, interested readers should seek out the serviceable edition published by Hesperus in 2002 as *Scriblerus*.)

161 Page 69 in Rumbold’s edition of the definitive, even more elaborate edition of *The Dunciad* Pope published in 1743.

162 Kerby-Miller notes that the Scriblerians were probably familiar with the *Chef d’oeuvre d’un inconnu* (1714) by Thémiseul de Saint-Hyacinthe, “a clever burlesque of learned editing in which a childish little poem of five stanzas is treated with great reverence and surrounded with a vast amount of scholarly pomp in the form of notes, commentaries, congratulatory epistles to the editor, etc., all done under the character of ‘Dr. Chrysostomus Mathanasius’ ” (70).

163 *The Dunciad Variorum* inspired far fewer imitations than *Gulliver’s Travels*, but in 1978 Richard Nason published *A Modern Dunciad* that cleverly satirized the 1970s New York poetry scene. I remember showing it to Dr. Richetti in our Pope and Swift seminar; he spent about 30 seconds disdainfully looking through it before returning it, affronted that anyone would try to emulate Pope’s masterpiece. But it is well worth seeking out if you like this sort of thing.

164 Pages 142–43 in Partridge’s edition, minus his interleaved commentary, which is more interesting than the deliberately dimwitted conversation.

165 William Plomer noted the resemblance in a 1946 essay: "Sometimes the talk in his books reminds one of Swift's *Polite Conversation*, but that is recorded rather than invented, and Firbank invents rather than records" (quoted in my *Ronald Firbank*, 81).

166 Thus Letellier 2002 (363), cut and pasted from Watson's 1971 *Bibliography* (993), which seems to derive from MacCarthy's dismissive remark in her 1944 book that *The Happy Unfortunate* is written "in a species of melodramatic blank verse" (232).

167 Emily Dickinson disagrees: "Parting is all we know of heaven,/And all we need of hell."

168 E.g., "When Duke Bellfond instant took the fair charge, and so protected, as our tale informs many, and doubtful were the lover's thoughts; thus distanced, strange to either's change of fortune, few letters got conveyance, and those dark ones affairs of moment; can they stay for utterance, much better being worded when we meet; but either constant, found once met a heaven, for does life know an ecstasy its love" (93).

169 For more on Hogarth's influence on novelists, see Paulson's essay, Moore's older *Hogarth's Literary Relationship*s, and de Voogd's *Henry Fielding and William Hogarth*.

170 Letellier states it was reprinted in 1763 as *The Reign of George VI, 1900–1925* (492), but that's a completely different book, one that sets George VI's reign at the beginning of the 20th century, not at the end, as Madden did. Despite a reference to Swift in the introduction, *George VI* has has little in common with Madden's novel. See chap. 3 of Alkon's *Origins of Futuristic Fiction* for interesting discussions of both.

171 See Beasley's "Portraits of a Monster" for further examples; he suggests Walpole inadvertently contributed "to the development of English prose fiction during that critical period of the novel's birth as a new and distinctive literary form of great popular appeal" (408). See also Aravamudan's informative essay "In the Wake of the Novel: The Oriental Tale as National Allegory," the second half of which is devoted to *Eovaai*.

172 See pp. 158 and 228n49 above, respectively, and see Harvey and Racault's essay on *Gaudentio di Lucca* for details on Berington's borrowings.

173 Richardson probably took the name Colbrand from the giant in *Guy of Warwick*, a popular chapbook of the time (see pp. 246–48 of my previous volume).

174 Most of the revisions were made in response to criticism by friends and correspondents, who urged Richardson to clean *Pamela* up, grammatically and morally, abetted by his own changing conception of his protagonist as he grew older. (See the essay by Eaves and Kimpel on all this for an object lesson on how to ruin a novel.) Consequently, you want to read the first edition (currently available from Oxford University Press, which I'll be citing by page number) for *Pamela* in the raw, so to speak, not the final revised edition (available from Penguin), *Pamela* all gussied up for church ladies of both sexes.

175 When Richardson began writing it, "Little did I think, at first, of making one, much less two volumes of it" (*Selected Letters*, 41).

176 In his introduction to the second edition (published on Valentine's Day 1741), Richardson reprinted 13 pages of commendatory letters he received from fans.

177 Straub suggests Pamela "embodies Richardson's solution to 'the servant problem': morally conscientious servants whose autonomy allows them choices that confirm, rather than challenge, a class- and gender-based domestic order" (48–49), but Pamela is portrayed as too freakishly unique to serve as a realistic model for most servants. Straub goes on to say, "The shared literacy between master and servant, man and woman, serves as the grounds for negotiating their romantic connection" (58), which is true, but again, the case of Pamela and Brandon is exceptional.

178 See the second half of Parker's useful essay on the time scheme of *Pamela* for a defense of Brandon's character; on the other hand, Brophy feels "He is so insufferably self-satisfied and so intellectually mediocre that marriage to him seems more punishment than reward" (65).

179 Page 36 of Ingrassia's edition, where the novel occupies pp. 51–227.

180 As paraphrased by Sabor in his introduction to volume 3 of *The Pamela Controversy* (xiv), a 6-volume collection of all the novels written in response to *Pamela* during the first decade after its publication (aside from *Joseph Andrews*), the rest of which are basically hackwork.

Thankfully, Kreissman's compact monograph *Pamela-Shamela* relieves the interested reader from actually having to read them.

181 As we've seen, a few Cervantine novels were published in England in the 17th century (*Moriomachia*, *Don Zara del Fuego*), but they were largely forgotten by Fielding's time.

182 Only fragments of it survive: for a tantalyzing description, see Kelly's *Book of Lost Books*, 11–14. Aristotle attributed it to Homer, but today critics speculate it was written by a Greek poet named Pigres (5th cent. bce). Martinus Scriblerus claims *Margites* set the pattern for Pope's *Dunciad* (69–70).

183 Fielding luxuriates in her plumpness—"she seemed bursting through her tight stays, especially in the part which confined her swelling breasts. Nor did her hips want the assistance of a hoop to extend them" (2.12)—obviously preferring that body type to "squinny-gut bitches," "those slender young women who seem rather intended to hang up in the hall of an anatomist than for any other purpose" (2.2, 12). On several occasions Richardson notes how skinny Pamela is.

184 Adams has a similar discussion earlier with an innkeeper, who feels religious matters "were things not to be mentioned nor thought of but in church" (2.3).

185 Indeed Scarron was probably a greater influence because *The Comic Novel* is more realistic than *Don Quixote*; it avoids "the absurdity of imagining windmills and wine-bags to be human creatures, or flocks of sheep to be armies," as Fielding wrote in praise of Charlotte Lennox's 1752 novel *The Female Quixote* (as quoted by Goldberg [75], who discusses a number of instances where Scarron influenced Fielding).

186 The phrase was picked up by the anonymous author of the pamphlet *An Essay on the New Species of Writing Founded by Mr. Fielding* (1751), an early recognition of Fielding's innovations. Attributed to Francis Coventry, it can be found in the appendix to the Broadview edition of his novel *Pompey the Little* (231–51), which we'll take for a run later. But as William Park suggests, it could be argued that this "new species of writing" was created a decade earlier in France by Prévost, Crébillon, and especially by Marivaux in *Marianne*—which Richardson claimed never to have read, though Fielding certainly did—and is based on the

"myth of wandering and return which may be found in almost any literature" (120).

187 Book 1, chap. 7 in the first edition; for the second edition published a few months later, Henry not only added a self-serving preface but "corrected" Sarah's grammar, diction, and especially her punctuation (she uses dashes expressively) to move it away from Richardson's style and closer to his own, wreaking all sorts of damage in the process as Janine Barchas shows in the chapter on *David Simple* in her fascinating book *Graphic Design, Print Culture, and the Eighteenth-Century Novel* (153–72).

188 The quotation is an example of what Barchas calls Fielding's "experimental punctuation," her attempt to signal "the transitions, interruptions, and momentary hesitations of direct speech" (160, 170). Here Spatter sputters as he searches for the words for Simple's Pollyanna worldview.

189 Between the two came *Familiar Letters between the Principal Characters in David Simple* (1747), which Fielding's modern editor calls a "heterogeneous collection" of letters, essays, and verses. It is not reprinted in any of the modern editions of *David Simple*.

190 Bree, 90, who makes the strongest case for this off-putting novel in her Twayne volume on la Fielding.

191 The Penguin edition I'll be citing (by letter number) is 1,465 pages long, but it's a huge book with tiny type; the 4-volume Everyman edition I once owned adds up to 2,127 pages. (I made it through only volume 1 before hitting the wall.) In the 20th century, some serial novels began appearing that are longer, such as Dorothy Richardson's *Pilgrimage* (1915–38) and Henry Williamson's *Chronicle of Ancient Sunlight* (1951–69). The Penguin edition reprints the first edition of *Clarissa*; as with *Pamela*, Richardson made many ill-advised changes and additions for later editions.

192 Specifically, he is referring to his hope that he has impregnated Clarissa, a possibility raised a few times but never confirmed. Clarissa is so sexless and sterile that pregnancy seems an aesthetic, if not a medical, impossibility.

193 The quoted words are Anna's, while dutiful Clarissa respects anyone in authority. She is sometimes called a "rebel" in the novel—against both

her parents and Lovelace—but she doesn't question authority per se, only its misuse, such as her father's delegation of power to his son James, and Loveless's departure from the code of a gentleman. She's fine with the patriarchal power structure of her day as long as men wield their power responsibly. Anna, not so much.

194 Eagleton is especially penetrating on "the sex/text metaphor in Richardson" (54), on letter-writing/reading as sexual activities. He could have added that in Richardson's day, "correspondence" was also a polite term for sexual intercourse. (There's a flaming gay sea captain in Smollett's *Roderick Random* who is accused "of maintaining a correspondence with his surgeon not fit to be named" [chap. 35]—and that doesn't mean a pen-pal relationship.)

195 "The *machinery*, madam, is a term invented by the critics to signify that part which the deities, angels, or demons are made to act in a poem" (Pope, prefatory letter to "The Rape of the Lock").

196 The *thou*s and *thee*s belong to the casual "Roman" style that Lovelace uses with his fellow rakes.

197 Head cheerleader for Team Lovelace is William Beatty Warner, whose controversial book *Reading* Clarissa is not only an insightful analysis of the textual games Lovelace and Clarissa play, but an interesting argument that, for all his faults, he's human, while for all her virtues, she's inhuman. (And by "faults" I don't mean his rape of Clarissa; for that, Lovelace, like all rapists and stalkers, deserves to be castrated.) Richardson was alarmed to learn that some early readers felt likewise, and thus devoted many of his revisions to blackening Lovelace's character.

198 These are the only two mentions of novels in the entire work; most of Richardson's literary references are to plays, and what he calls his "dramatic narrative" (postscript) is an attempt to adapt the immediacy of a stage performance to the printed page. I believe *Clarissa* is the first novel to include a dramatis personae up front, like a play.

199 Even though Richardson had an outline for the novel, he sort of made it up as he went along, confessing in a 1753 letter to his Dutch translator that "when he ended one letter, hardly knew what his next would be" (quoted in Eaves and Kimpel, 416).

200 Like Richardson, Clarissa regards literature as propaganda, not art: she prefers tragedies "for the sake of the instruction, the warning, and the example generally given in them" (194)—not for their language or aesthetic qualities.

201 Nevertheless, in later editions Richardson added two more letters at this point!

202 Terry Castle, in her headnote to selections from Richardson's novels in *The Literature of Lesbianism*, 267. Surprisingly, she includes passages from *Pamela* and *Sir Charles Grandison* but not from *Clarissa*, despite the obviousness of Anna and Clarissa's homosexual feelings (probably because the lesbian hints are scattered). Castle is the author of a smart book and several papers on *Clarissa*, in disregard of the title character's petulant remark "I don't care to have papers so freely written about me" (16).

203 Page xxxv in the well-annotated Oxford edition; the novel itself will be cited by chapter.

204 I've already noted Eliza Haywood's habit of jumping on literary fads, so it's probably not coincidental that, four months after *Roderick Random* appeared, she published a short novel entitled *Life's Progress through the Passions; or, The Adventures of Natura* (1748) about a "good-natured but lusty young adventurer" whose "travels take him about England and Europe, where he entangles himself with predatory whores, lusty nuns, rapacious French soldiers, . . ." and so on, until "in the declining years of a miserable life he meets, falls in love with, and marries a virtuous matron whose example steadies him and leads him to peace and the rewards of quiet happiness" (Beasley, 179–80).

205 *Memoirs of Fanny Hill* is the title of an expurgated edition Cleland published in 1750, and since then *Fanny Hill* has become the popular title for the unexpurgated edition too (and for movie versions), so I'll use that more distinctive title, and will cite Sabor's 1985 edition (the first accurate one since 1749) by page number.

206 Page 49 in her essay " 'This Tail-Piece of Morality,' " in a collection of original essays she and Alan Jackson published as *Launching Fanny Hill* (2003).

207 Among the academics who have grappled with this question, Lena Olsson has shown that Fanny's life is indeed consistent with that of a

certain lucky class of prostitutes in mid-18th century England: see her essay in the Fowler/Jackson collection (81–101).

208 In the charming and fairly faithful 2007 film version starring Rebecca Night, the older Fanny becomes so worked up while writing a sex scene that she love-bites her quill.

209 In the introduction to her translation of La Mettrie's short treatise, Thomson explains: "The title, 'machine man', refers specifically to the Cartesian hypothesis that animals are merely machines without a soul, and La Mettrie claims that what he is doing is simply applying the Cartesian hypothesis to humans; he shows repeatedly that whatever applies to animals applies equally to humans" (xvii). Descartes's phrase was *bête machine*, which appears on p. 164 of *Fanny Hill* as "brute machine."

210 Page 10 in Garland's facsimile of the 1749 edition. The 1968 Award paperback, reprinted from an 1844 edition, omits the introduction and changes Camillo's name to Charles Manly. After *Fanny Hill* was legalized in 1963, many publishers rushed to reissue "classic" erotica like this, often with silly covers: this one has a photograph of a woman who looks like a dentist's wife from Palo Alto slipping out of a little black dress.

211 See Johnson's "A Comic Homunculus before *Tristram Shandy*," which discusses the similarities between the two novels without suggesting Sterne necessarily knew of *The History of the Human Heart*.

212 These too may be plagiarized; one of them ludicrously cites Scottish philosopher Francis Hutcheson's *Inquiry Concerning Beauty, Order, Harmony, and Design* (1725) to explain why Camillo doesn't want to have coitus with an ugly woman (197n).

213 "Art and Artifice in *Tom Jones*" (1968), reprinted in Baker's Norton Critical Edition of *Tom Jones*, 789. Hilles explains that his "plan is based on what John Wood originally designed for Prior Park, the stately home of Fielding's patron Ralph Allen [the model for Allworthy]. According to Wood, the extent of the whole, from the extreme left (the stables) to the extreme right (a picture gallery and bedrooms), 'was proposed to answer that of three sides of a duodecagon [a 12-sided object], inscribed within a circle of a quarter of a mile diameter' " (788).

214 This of course echoes Jesus' observation that the Sabbath is made for man, not man for the Sabbath (Mark 2:27) and that, unlike the Pharisees, one should follow the spirit, not the letter, of the law.

215 Sophia is an anti-Clarissa, for she has no pretense "to that kind of wisdom which is the result only of great learning and experience, the affectation of which, in a young woman, is as absurd as any of the affectations of an ape. No dictatorial sentiments, no judicial opinions, no profound criticisms" (17.3)—the very qualities Richardson endows Clarissa with.

216 Fielding assumed he was writing primarily for a male audience, as indicated by Squire Western's blue language, some smutty double entendres (such as Jones' obsession with Sophia's muff), and his liberal use of Latin quotations throughout: "This Latin she took to be some affront, and answered, 'You may be a gentleman, sir, but you don't show yourself one to talk Latin to a woman' " (10.4). Nevertheless, many 18th-century demireps read and loved *Tom Jones*.

217 Which is, to quote the king of Brobdingnag, that the English are "the most pernicious race of little odious vermin that nature ever suffered to crawl upon the surface of the earth"—a judgment many English novelists of this period seem to confirm because 90 percent of their characters are despicable, envious, petty, selfish, back-biting, arrogant, hypocritical, greedy, ridiculous, vain, ungrateful, and/or malicious. Jones disagrees, but the 90-year-old Man of the Hill tells him he's still young: he'll change his tune after a few more decades on that sceptered isle.

218 At the end of the formal counterpart to this tale, Sophie misinterprets the story Mrs. Fitzpatrick tells her, assuming it's a warning against marrying an Irishman, rather than (the narrator tells her) against marrying a fool—the moral of Defoe's *Roxana*. Fielding includes further dramatizations of valid versus invalid reader responses when Jones and Partridge attend a puppet show (12.5) and when Jones takes Partridge to see *Hamlet* (16.5), underscoring the critifictional nature of the text.

219 Quoted in the Norton *Tom Jones*, 672. The other two are *Oedipus Rex* and Ben Jonson's play *The Alchemist*.

220 A previous chapter includes a Fieldingesque digression on the usefulness of chapters in books.

221 Garn discusses the probable influence of *Charlotte Summers* on two novels by Mikhail Chulkov (1740–93): a sprawling cross between *Decameron* and Scarron's *Comic Novel* entitled *The Mocker, or Slavonic Tales* (1766–89), and a short picaresque called *The Comely Cook* (1770). I haven't included a section on the early Russian novel because not many were written in the early-modern period, and those that were mostly imitated English and continental models. (Plus hardly any of them have been translated into English.) If interested, see Gasperetti's *Rise of the Russian Novel*, which pays special attention to Chulkov's fabulous-sounding carnivalesque novel.

222 Paltock includes a 5-page glossary at the end of the book, the first novelist, I believe, to do so.

223 Youarekee's king is named Georigetti, and the rebel leader is called Harlokin; "Harlequin" was the code name for the Stuart pretender in the early 1720s, when this portion of the novel takes place.

224 A. L. Morton (1952), quoted in James Grantham Turner's introduction to the Oxford edition (xxxvii).

225 Pages 154–56 in the Broadview edition of Johnson's *Rasselas*, where the essay occupies pp. 153–58. Johnson doesn't name names, but he obviously had *Tom Jones* in mind, which he hated. (Boswell takes him to task a few times for that opinion in his *Life*.)

226 Page 247 in the Broadview edition of Coventry's *Pompey the Little*, where it occupies pp. 231–51.

227 Quoted on p. ix of Day's introduction to the Oxford edition of *Pompey the Little*. My lady goes on to say she saw herself in the hypochondriacal Mrs. Qualmsick, one of Pompey's last owners.

228 Chapter 105 in the first edition, reprinted by Oxford and hereafter cited by chapter. In 1758, Smollett published a lightly expurgated edition with different chapter numbering, which was the only version available until the 20th century.

229 For example, Haywood is several paragraphs into a secret meeting between two characters when she interrupts to say, "I should before now have acquainted my reader that the lady was not only masked but also close muffled in her hood . . ." (2.21). Instead of rewriting the page to insert that information where it belongs, she left it there and kept scribbling. As further evidence of first-draft haste (or plain bad writing),

one sympathetic critic expresses difficulty in interpreting a passage due to Haywood's "confused grammatical subordination and technically unclear use of pronouns" (Flint, 217–18).

230 There's another phallic image near the end when Trueworth spies Betsy in a garden and, to get a closer look at her, "thrust himself as far as he was able between the branches of which the arbour was composed" (4.21). By that point the widowed Betsy has presumably gotten over her fear of sex and they marry shortly thereafter.

231 Published in the *Covent Garden Journal* in February 1752, it is reprinted as an appendix to the Broadview edition of *Betsy Thoughtless*, 639–40.

232 Written in her copy of *Amelia*, as quoted by Battestin in his introduction to the Wesleyan edition, xvi.

233 Her first novel, *The Life of Harriot Stuart* (1750), is an assured coming-of-age story most noteworthy for being one of the first English novels to be partly set in North America, for which reason I'll discuss it in the next chapter.

234 *Covent Garden Journal*, no. 24, 24 March 1752. Lennox returned the compliment in her 1758 novel *Henrietta*, whose protagonist prefers *Joseph Andrews* over the scandal novels of Manley and Haywood.

235 Unfortunately, after turning to nonfiction for a while, Lennox seems to have taken their advice for her subsequent novels, which are much more realistic and largely unread nowadays, except for her final one, *Euphemia* (1790), which, like her first, I'll mention in the next chapter because of its North American setting.

236 The autobiographical introduction to Goodall's only other book, *The True Englishman's Miscellany* (1740), suggests the first part of the novel is somewhat autobiographical. It also indicates Goodall was born around 1715; his date of death is unknown.

237 This expands on the quotation from Shakespeare's *Richard II* that Goodall placed on the title page: "My brain I'll prove the female to my soul,/My soul the father, and these two beget/A generation of still-breeding thoughts;/And these same thoughts people this little world/In humours like the people of this world" (5.5.6–10).

238 Probably not the metaphysical poet John Cleveland (1613–58) but Prévost's *Cleveland*, which was eponymously published in England as

"Written by Himself."

239 Sarah Fielding and Jane Collier may have had this passage in mind when the protagonist of their novel *The Cry* (1754) rejects the paranoid "impossibility of conversing with any sort of creatures but beasts of prey, tigers, wolves, and foxes, who are ever laying in wait to destroy me" (1.1).

240 From the "Concluding Note by the Editor" at the end of *Sir Charles Grandison*. (The body of the text will be cited by volume/letter.) Critics agree Richardson had *Tom Jones* in mind here, which eclipsed *Clarissa* in sales and popularity.

241 It is omitted from the Oxford edition, even though Harris spends half a page discussing it in her introduction; Barchas discusses it at even greater length (200–13).

242 Quoted on p. xxi of Harris's introduction.

243 Pages 8, 14 in Schofield's facsimile edition (which reduces and prints 4 pages of the original per page); the body of the novel will be cited by part/scene. Jane Collier, with whom Fielding lived in the early 1750s, had already published a satirical handbook of anti-etiquette entitled *An Essay on the Art of Ingeniously Tormenting* (1753), available today—unlike, inexplicably, *The Cry*—in a modern edition (Oxford University Press, 2006).

244 By "best authors," Fielding and Collier obviously meant Samuel Richardson, and it's interesting to note that, according to Boswell, Dr. Johnson spoke in 1768 of Richardson in the exact same language: unlike Fielding, Richardson dissected "characters of nature, where a man must dive into the recesses of the human heart" (346).

245 Quoted by Bree (107), who devotes chap. 7 of her Twayne book to *The Cry*. In a related adaptation of dramatic form, Fielding's next novel, *The Lives of Cleopatra and Octavia* (1757), consists of two monologues delivered, she writes in her introduction, "on the stage of the world": "the great femme fatale and the pattern wife," as Bree calls them (110), each delivers a monologue explaining her actions, though, as Bree goes on to say, Fielding's intent was not a history lesson but "an anatomy of 18th-century, rather than Roman, femininity" (121). Fielding ignored the opportunity to vary their voices—luxurious Asiatic for Mark Antony's

serpent of old Nile, crisp Attic for his dutiful wife—resulting in a rather wooden performance.

246 I'm unaware of a book like Beasley's *Novels of the 1740s* that covers the decade, but two good essays do: the subsection "Novels of the 1750s" in Keymer's *Sterne, The Moderns, and the Novel*, and Lupton's "Giving Power to the Medium: Recovering the 1750s." And like Booth, the first to explore the frisky Fifties, I must pass over novels "which, if written in the thirties or forties, would have been landmarks in this history but which, coming when they do, are not worth individual citation" (183), such as *The Adventures of Mr. Loveill* by John Hill (1750), *Constantia* (1751), *Cleora* (1752), *The Adventures of a Valet* (1752), *The Stage-Coach* by Susan Smythies (1753), *The Temple Beau* (1754), *Memoirs of the Noted Buckhorse* by Christopher Anstey (1756), *A Journal of Eight Days Journey from Portsmouth to Kingston upon Thames* by Jonas Hanway (1756), *The Juvenile Adventures of David Ranger* by Edward Kimber (1756), *The History of Henry Dumont, Esq., and Miss Charlotte Evelyn* by Charlotte Charke (1756), *The Anti-Gallican* by Edward Long (1757), and *The Campaign, a True Story* (1759). I intended to write about a smutty fairy tale with the winning title *Did You Ever See Such Damn'd Stuff? or, So Much the Better: A Story Without Head or Tail, Wit or Humor* (1760), but this anonymous novella appears to be a translation of an unidentified French jeu d'esprit.

247 This is the second reference in *The Card* to "a method of dueling peculiar to [Archy's] cousin Grandison" (2.9). Archy's romantic adventures in Italy wink at those of Sir Charles.

248 One of them is named Humphry Copper, and later they meet "a certain personage named Clinker" (4.22); in what appears to be the only essay on Toldervy's novel, Keymer suggests *Two Orphans* may have influenced Smollett's *Humphry Clinker* (55).

249 Page 47 in Haslett's prodigiously annotated edition of part 1; part 2 will be cited by page number from Garland's facsimile edition of the complete novel (1766).

250 Amory's first book of fiction was a volume of linked stories entitled *Memoirs of Several Ladies of Great Britain* (1755), which is cited a few times in *John Buncle* and chronologically follows the novel.

251 Chap. 3, hereafter cited by chapter from Richard's edition, which like other Broadview editions, is loaded with extras, including Johnson's 1749 poem "The Vanity of Human Wishes," a far superior treatment of the theme of *Rasselas*.

252 Johnson wrote his novella the same month *Candide* was published, so there's no question of influence or competition. The Abyssinian setting was suggested by a book Johnson had translated in 1735, Jerome Lobo's travelogue *A Voyage to Abyssinia*, which mentions a man named Rassela Christos.

253 Annotators of *Tristram Shandy* always identify the reference in 9.34 to Scarron as the author of *The Comic Novel,*though it's possible Furetière is meant, for his considerably more Shandean *Roman bourgeois* was translated into English as *Scarron's City Romance* in 1671, a misattribution not cleared up in Sterne's lifetime.

254 Viktor Shklovsky, the Russian theorist I'm paraphrasing—from his pioneering essay on *Tristram Shandy* in *Theory of Prose*—uses the words *fabula* and *syuzhet* for story and plot, respectively (170). French (and French-influenced) theorists prefer *histoire* and *récit*.

255 Introduction to his *Laurence's Sterne's* Tristram Shandy, 11.

256 Walter is quoting/paraphrasing the 1612 English translation of Pierre's Charron's *On Wisdom* (1601), a study of Montaigne. In other words, Walter is still stuck in the Renaissance, so woefully out-of-date that he can't be taken seriously on this or almost any other point. Like Amory's *John Buncle*, like all novels of learned wit, *Tristram Shandy* is a tapestry woven from many other texts, most of them unacknowledged. This isn't plagiarism but artistic appropriation, as in collage and sampling.

257 Johnson's *Dictionary of the English Language* (1755) was an attempt to pin down the meaning of words; Sterne shows how easily words become unpinned, and the resulting confusion—sometimes comic, sometimes tragic—when words go wild. Casuists calculate the word *fiddlestick* has 14,000 different meanings, depending on how it is pronounced (9.19).

258 A violin's strings are tuned G-D-A-E; Tristram's use of "a.e.i.o.u." indicates he's tuning his language at the beginning of the chapter before he performs his narrative for us.

259 Of course this could be a postmasturbatory lament for his former sexual potency. After a while it seems every line in *Tristram Shandy* can and

should be taken two or more ways.

260 In a profoundly perceptive essay in Cash and Stedmond's *Winged Skull* (258–69), R. F. Brissenden speculates that *Tristram Shandy* began as a Scriblerian satire like *A Tale of a Tub* and *Martinus Scriberlus*, but gradually "became a novel simply because the Shandys and the Shandy world began to live. To begin with, Shandeism, rather than the Shandys themselves, was probably the most important thing with Sterne. The characters were there primarily to illustrate a theory (or set of theories). This, of course, they do—but they also begin to live in their own right" (268).

261 Find Flint's *Family Fictions* for a fine analysis of the Shandy family dynamics (271–88).

262 I choked up with tears at Corporal Trim's first appearance in Michael Winterbottom's innovative film version of *Tristram Shandy* (2006), as though I were seeing a beloved old friend for the first time in decades.

263 Like virtually every other document and story narrated in *Tristram Shandy*, Trim's recitation is interrupted and commented upon as it progresses, microcosmically mirroring the macrocosmic interruptions throughout the main text.

264 In *Infinite Jest*, Wallace calls this method of narrative organization "anticonfluential," which the narrator flippantly defines as "a stubborn and possibly intentionally irritating refusal of different narrative lines to merge into any kind of meaningful confluence" (996n61). In an essay comparing *Infinite Jest* to *Tristram Shandy*, Christopher Thomas doesn't mention their shared anticonfluential structure but comments on other similarities. See also Stephen Swain's online essay "'Here's a crown for your trouble': Narrative Form in Laurence Sterne's Tristram Shandy and David Foster Wallace's The Pale King" (2013).

265 In 1974 and 1975, Garland Publishing brought out a 22-volume set called *Sterneiana* that reproduces most of these, from Carr's 1760 knockoff to Isaac Brandon's *Fragments in the Manner of Sterne* (1797). It's fun to leaf through the volumes because the authors obviously had fun imitating Sterne, but there's nothing substantial here, except for vol. 22, which reproduces John Ferriar's *Illustrations of Sterne* (1798), the first extended study of Sterne's work. For an overview of these

imitations, see the chapter entitled "The Offspring of Tristram Shandy" in Shepperson's *Novel in Motley.*

266 See Poole's "Reading *Either-Or* for the Very First Time" for a persuasive argument that these two fictionalized philosophy books are "*first and foremost*" literary works that sometimes resemble "sections of Laurence Sterne's *Tristram Shandy*" (44).

267 See Voogd and Neubauer's *Reception of Laurence Sterne in Europe*, which is mostly on translations of Sterne's work but also discusses some novelists who wrote under his influence.

268 He published the first article in Japan on *Tristram Shandy* (1897) before writing this unconventional novel (1905–6); see Natsuo Shumata's "Laurence Sterne and Japan" (Cash and Stedmond, 186–93).

269 Thirwell followed this with a Shandean work of literary criticism entitled (here in the States) *The Divided States* (née *Miss Herbert*), which includes an engaging sequence on Sterne.

270 But not of John Barth's novels, surprisingly enough. In a 1984 lecture, Barth said, "But much as I honor Laurence Sterne, I have never been able quite to finish *Tristram Shandy*. . . . I prefer the kind of technical fireworks that speak to my heart as well as to my mind and my funny-bone" (*Further Fridays*, 44–45). Yet that's exactly what Sterne intended: "I write a careless kind of civil, nonsensical, good humoured *Shandean* book, which will do all your hearts good— [¶] —And all your heads too, —provided you understand it" (6.17). Many of the novels above belong to the category castigated today as "difficult" fiction, a genre Sterne more or less invented: "A general looker on" won't appreciate his work, "but I write not to them" (8.17).

Calvino's often-quoted remark first appeared as a blurb on the back cover of an Italian translation of Sterne's *A Political Romance* (1759, aka *The History of a Good Warm Watch-Coat*), a satirical pamphlet about a local church dispute that served as a warm-up for writing *Tristram Shandy*.

That list, you've probably noticed, is a total sausage fest: the daughters of *Tristram Shandy* might include Djuna Barnes's *Ryder*, Virgina Woolf's *Orlando*, Brigid Brophy's *In Transit*, Julieta Campos's *Fear of Losing Eurydice*, Gabrielle Burton's *Heartbreak Hotel*, Jaimy Gordon's *Shamp of the City-Solo*, Janice Galloway's *Trick Is to Keep*

Breathing ("This book resembles *Tristram Shandy* as rewritten by Sylvia Plath"—*New York Times Book Review*), Sarah Schulman's *Empathy*, Jeanette Winterson's *Gut Symmetries*, Helen DeWitt's *Last Samurai*, Heather Woodbury's *What Ever*, Cintra Wilson's *Colors Insulting to Nature*, Vanessa Place's *La Medusa*, Nicola Barker's *Darkmans*, Emilie Autumn's *Asylum for Wayward Victorian Girls*, Carol Hart's *History of the Novel in Ants*, Sheila Heti's *How Should a Person Be?*, certain novels by Kathy Acker, Christine Brooke-Rose, Rikki Ducornet, Thalia Field, Xiaolu Guo, Carole Maso, Ali Smith, and Aritha Van Herk, and some formally innovative YA novels by the likes of Susie Day, E. Lockhart, and Lauren Myracle. But Sterne's cocktail of comic erudition, slap-and-tickle sexuality, bittersweet sentimentalism, and achronological form doesn't seem to attract many women writers—or women readers, according to Professor Elizabeth Terries. She says in her career she's taught *Tristram Shandy* to nearly 500 female students, and estimates "not more than twenty enjoyed reading Sterne's work or will ever return to it" (111).

271 See the section on the sentimental novel below (pp. 862–67) for further discussion of this subject, one so important to the 18th century that it's been called the Age of Sentiment.

272 Page 11 in New and Day's edition, which, like the Penguin *Tristram Shandy*, is based on the definitive but expensive University of Florida Press edition of Sterne's complete works. The annotations are overwhelming, but they unearth the intellectual depths of this deceptively airy novel.

273 I believe this is the first novel to end midsentence without closing punctuation. Later examples include Cummings's *Eimi*, Joyce's *Finnegans Wake*, Beckett's *Malone Dies* and *How It Is*, Calvino's *Cloven Viscount*, Cabrera Infante's *Three Trapped Tigers*, Delany's *Dhalgren*, Gaddis's *Carpenter's Gothic*, Fuentes' *Christopher Unborn*,Wallace's *Broom of the System*, Olsen's *Anxious Pleasures*

274 Though published more than 80 years ago, Joyce Tompkins's *Popular Novel in England, 1770–1800* remains the best overview of this period.

275 Chap. 2 in Folkenflik's fine edition, hereafter cited by chapter. A "greave" is the part of a suit of armor that covers the shins, just as the *quijote* covers the thighs.

276 Volumes 1 and 2 were published together in 1765–66, and the final three yearly from 1768 to 1770; Brooke gives no explanation for dropping the author–reader dialogues in the later volumes.

277 Frans De Bruyn has an interesting essay on Burke's Quixoticism that I'll cite later in my discussion of William Godwin's novel *Caleb Williams*. Godwin, as it happens, is castigated in *The Infernal Quixote*, Charles Lucas's reactionary 1801 novel; Lucas quotes *The Spiritual Quixote* at one point, and intended his title to denominate a demonic, rather than spiritual, character. For Lucas, as for some others, Quixoticism meant fanaticism.

278 Later editors tried to smooth things out by inserting the added incidents into the earlier narrative per Johnstone's cross-references, but they had to do some creative editing to make it work. (Johnstone meant to do the work himself, but never got around to it.) Samuel Johnson recommend *Chrysal* for publication, another example of his poor taste in novels.

279 Review of Scott's *Adventures of a Rupee*, as quoted in Johnston's "Little Lives," 143. This minor genre has received a surprising amount of scholarly attention in recent years; for useful overviews, see Flint's "Speaking Objects," Lupton's "The Knowing Book," and especially Blackwell's *Secret Life of Things*. In 2012, Pickering & Chatto published *British It-Narratives, 1750–1830*, a 4-volume set edited by Blackwell, Lupton, et al. that gathers over 60 examples of the genre.

280 I should say *overt* sexual tension; see Nancy Paul's "Is Sex Necessary?" for an insightful reading of sublimated sexuality in *Ophelia*.

281 The Broadview edition I've quoted—which has a fabulous cover photo—includes in an appendix two scenes from *Evelina* that seem indebted to *Ophelia*, and in his introduction, Sabor discusses its probable influence on Austen's earliest writings.

282 Pages 117 and 285 in the recent Broadview edition, hereafter cited by page. Like Richardson's heroines, Sidney has an unbelievable ability to recreate extensive conversations; Sheridan seems to realize how unrealistic this is and lamely tries to explain it away when Sidney writes, "I have set down the whole conversation, with every other particular, exactly as my mother related it. [¶] She, who has a most circumstantial memory, repeated it word for word; and I, from a custom of throwing

upon paper every thing that occurs to me, have habituated myself to retain the minutest things" (133).

283 Page 30 in Hutner and Garret's introduction to *Sidney Bidulph*.

284 Both novels have been edited with useful introductions and notes by Jonathan Gross. His description of *Emma* is from page xii of his introduction to *The Sylph*, hereafter cited by page number. Lady Georgiana is an ancestor of the late Lady Diana, Princess of Wales.

285 Volume 1, letter 18, and volume 2, letter 28; hereafter cited by volume/letter.

286 Burney uses the capitalized phrase "PRIDE and PREJUDICE" three times near the end as a character sums up the moral of the story (book 10, chapter 10), which is where some critics say Jane Austen, who admired *Cecilia*, got the title for her first published novel. But the phrase is also used a few times in Bage's *Hermsprong* (1796), which Austen owned, so who knows?

287 The novel shares a number of plot elements with *The Sylph*, including Jewish money-lenders, a character named Biddulph, and a gambling husband who cancels his debts with a bullet to his head. Due to a misleading ad, some people thought Burney was the author of the anonymous *Sylph*.

288 In vol. 2, chap. 8, she tells her guardian she's thinking of dressing up as a nun to make a "conquest" of him at a masquerade, for she's read bawdy stories "about nuns and their confessors." Instead, she appears as the goddess Diana in a tight outfit that shows lots of skin.

289 Inchbald was Catholic, but according to her biographer, she "had serious doubts about her religion and her relationship to the authority of the church" when writing this novel (Jenkins, 277). Unfortunately, she returned to the fold and, near the end of her life, let her confessor talk her into burning her memoirs.

290 Page xxxiv of Gary Kelly's modern edition. Like *Cornelia*, it is very old fashioned, completely out of step with the more experimental fiction of the '50s.

291 On the penultimate page, she describes a female as having a countenance expressing "sense and sensibility."

292 The editors of the 2011 edition were the first to attribute it to Sheridan; previously it had been tentatively attributed to Maria Ruxton. The novel

will be cited by letter number.

293 Chap. 1 in Kelly's edition, hereafter cited by chapter. As examples, Mary names two sappy, forgotten novels: *The Platonic Marriage* by Mrs. H. Cartwright (1787) and the anonymous *History of Eliza Warwick* (1778).

294 Conclusion of chap. 16, in the same edition by Kelly (who supplies very full annotations).

295 Later, Maria says of another woman's husband that he "was her master; no slave in the West Indies had one more despotic" (12). In Scott's *Sir George Ellison*, a white Jamaican plantation owner says "women and negroes were made to be slaves" (1.4). Englishwomen made the connection two centuries before John Lennon and Yoko Ono wrote "Woman Is the Nigger of the World."

296 "The Persistence of Reading," 22, 2. She also argues that Emma Courtney's problems stem from her uncritical reading of Rousseau's *Julie*, which also misleads both Bridgetina and Julia. When dealing with 18th-century novels, it's easy to forget that many of them are, in effect, YA novels: coming-of-age stories read mostly by teens. In a 1763 novel I'll discuss later, the author addresses his reader "whatsoever thou art, whether a judge, a colonel, a merchant, or perchance, more probably, a giggling miss in her teens, or one who pretends to be in her teens . . ." (*The Peregrinations of Jeremiah Grant*, chap. 3).

297 Pages xviii and xxiv of his introduction to *Oriental Tales*, an anthology of four examples of the genre from 1761 to 1804.

298 Chap. 12 in Mack's *Oriental Tales*, where the novel occupies pp. 1–113.

299 Page 194 in Mack's *Oriental Tales*, where the novella occupies pp. 115–94.

300 Pages 98 and 22 in Lonsdale's edition; this reprints the 1816 edition of *Vathek*, for which Beckford revised Henley's earlier translation—published without Beckford's permission—and pruned the annotations. For a more fluent translation of the French original, read Herbert B. Grimsditch's version (first published in 1929 and reprinted a few times thereafter).

301 The best edition for these episodes is Graham's, listed in the bibliography. If he had retained the Henley/Beckford annotations to

Vathek, his edition would be ideal.

302 All quotations are from Price's critical edition of Colman's first two plays, where *Polly Honeycombe* occupies pp. 191–235. "Precursors to public libraries, circulating libraries charged a membership fee for readers to gain borrowing privileges and offered access to works that (most) readers could not afford to buy. Women of leisure classes were thought to comprise the majority of their members, and their main stock was considered to be the novel, though they carried other genres, including sermons and histories, as well"—editorial note to Robinson's *Walsingham*, 217n2.

303 Price heroically identifies most of them (242–46). According to this catalog, *Fanny Hill* and other erotica were available to teens like Polly.

304 Chap. 2 in Duquette's recent edition, hereafter cited by chapter.

305 Robinson's 1797 novel *Walsingham* may have been influenced by *Julia*, for it contains even more poems (and a table of contents for them), but they are less organic to the novel than those in *Julia*.

306 At one point, Seymour makes off with one of Julia's gloves and, alone in his room, "pressed it to his heart and lips ten thousand times, and was guilty of the most passionate extravagancies" (15). I think I know what that means, especially if the glove was fur-lined. Julia wouldn't want it back.

307 From Kirkpatrick's introduction to *Castle Rackrent*, vii (hereafter cited by page). Born in England, Edgeworth moved with her family to Ireland as a child, and later helped manage her father's estate, which was run on English principles, not on the Irish ones she skewers in this novella."Rackrent" is an excessive, extortionate rent.

308 An Irish genre set in the country mansions owned by Protestant, Anglo-Irish families who leased land to Catholic tenants.

309 *Critical Review*, January 1763, 13. (The review is unsigned but is now assumed to be his.) There is a paragraph in the dedication of *Count Fathom* that is usually pointed to as Smollett's major statement on the theory of the novel, but the first few pages of this review contain a much fuller statement.

310 It should be remembered that in 1762, when this novel was written, *Tristram Shandy* was still a work-in-progress. Elsewhere in *Jeremiah*

Grant, there's a character who is translating Sterne's novel into French to make money.

311 Letter of 14 October, hereafter cited by date. The letters run from 2 April to 20 November of an unspecified year, which seems to be 1766. They are preceded by two letters between the editor and publisher of the collection.

312 He thumbs his nose at the genre in a metafictional scene in which Jeremy visits a successful writer named Mr. S— (obviously Smollett) who entertains a motley crew of Grub Street hacks, one of whom used to write novels, but no more, for "that branch of business is now engrossed by female authors, who publish merely for the propagation of virtue, with so much ease and spirit, and delicacy, and knowledge of the human heart, and all in the serene tranquillity of high life, that the reader is not only enchanted by their genius, but reformed by their morality" (10 June).

313 Rowan Gibbs discusses the attribution in "Who Wrote the First New Zealand Novel?", *KITE: Newsletter of the New Zealand Literature Association* 7 (1994): 8–9.

314 It can be found on pp. 449–65 of *The Complete Poetry and Prose of William Blake*. For more on it, see Eugene Kirk, "Blake's Menippean *Island*," *Philological Quarterly* 59.2 (Spring 1980): 194–215.

315 See Braudy's essay in the bibliography for this and other formal features of the genre, and part 1 of Brissenden's *Virtue in Distress* for a superb overview.

316 In Boswell's *Johnson*, he humorlessly tells the following anecdote as an example of Goldsmith's resentment when others eclipsed him as the center of attention: "once at the exhibition of the *Fantoccini* in London, when those who sat next him observed with what dexterity a puppet was made to toss a pike, he could not bear that it should have such praise, and exclaimed with some warmth, 'Pshaw! I can do it better myself' " (260–61). Hello, is this mic on?

317 Introduction to Mackenzie's *Man of Feeling*, xxi–ii.

318 Though gaggingly sentimental, this one is interesting and will be discussed in the final section of this chapter.

319 Actually, this is a *satire* of sentimental novels, written by Charles Dodd (1787).

320 Pages 7 and 12 in the Everyman edition, hereafter cited by page.

321 Or it may just be a "high-camp comedy," as Richard Davenport-Hines insists; see his *Gothic* (135–41), which includes illustrations of Walpole's Gothic castle at Strawberry Hill, the the model for the castle at Otranto.

322 E.g., Thomas Leland's *Longsword, Earl of Salisbury: An Historical Romance* (1762), which is available in a modern edition (NYU Press, 1957), and William Hutchinson's *Hermitage: A British Story* (1772), which has a few supernatural touches.

323 Garber's introduction to *The Italian*, vii.

324 This is an example of why I have been modernizing punctuation from old texts; modern editors who retain premodern punctuation aren't doing their authors a favor by making them sound like they have a speech impediment.

325 Not surprisingly, Sade considered *The Monk* "superior in every respect to the strange outpourings of the brilliant imagination of Mrs Radcliffe," though as an atheist he deplored Lewis's reliance on the supernatural, which "forfeited the reader's credulity" ("An Essay on Novels," in *The Crimes of Love*, 13–14).

326 This is the same conclusion Arabella reaches in *The Female Quixote* about the heroines of 17-century French romances.

327 If you like this sort of thing, visit the Website of Valancourt Books; they have reprinted many of the most popular Gothic thrillers of the 1790s, including translations from the German.

328 The standard book on this genre is Kelly's *English Jacobin Novel* (1976). The Jacobins were the violent extremists in the French Revolution, so British conservatives applied that term, inaccurately and contemptuously, to sympathizers in England, even though all the novelists I discuss in this section "were really Girondins, favouring reform by peaceful means" (Fletcher, introduction to *Celestina*, 31).

329 As Roger Manville calls it in his 1987 book on Inchbald, quoted in Maurer's introduction (20).

330 The clergy is represented by the vain, pompous Dr. Blick, who was based on the same bishop (Samuel Horsley) that modeled for William in *Nature and Art* and for a similar character in Holcroft's *Hugh Trevor*.

331 For an overview of the subgenre, see chap. 6 of Shepperson's *Novel in Motley* and especially Grenby's *Anti-Jacobin Novel.*

332 Verhoeven's introduction to *The Vagabond*, 12–13: an excellent account of the historical background of anti-Jacobin novels.

333 From the anonymous *Evils of Prostitution*, quoted by Binhammer, 1.

334 See pp. 580–81 of my previous volume for a medieval Japanese critifiction and a humongous footnote listing later examples. And for a more recent, demonstration-class example, see Ali Smith's *Artful* (2012).

335 It appears to be a group effort in fact as well as fiction, for according to the title page it was "Conceived by a Celebrated HEN and Laid before the Public by a Famous COCK-FEEDER," meaning a man who tends fighting cocks. (Warning: do not Google "cock-feeder"; use the *OED* instead.) *The Egg* will be cited by page because the chapter numbering is irregular (and starts over for the last third).

336 It's *Tristram Shandy* that *The Egg* most resembles, even down to misnumbered chapters and a missing chapter (13).

337 Evening 7, hereafter cited by evening from Kelly's annotated edition in volume 6 of *Bluestocking Feminism*, where the novel occupies pp. 161–275.

338 The tale is included in Mack's *Oriental Tales* (197–211), and in his introduction he offers some very perceptive remarks on its relationship to the main part of *The Progress of Romance*.

339 This is the major weakness of Reeve's theory of fiction: like many male critics at the time, she regards novels not as works of art but as object lessons in morality, and disapproves of all authors (like Voltaire and Sterne) who challenge or mock traditional beliefs and values.

340 Letter 2 in Cook's 2009 edition, the first reprint since 1786. The English translation of *Werther* appeared in 1779.

341 Gibbon is the historian, Reynolds and Copley the famous painters, and William Hayley (1745–1820) is a poet whom Theresa quotes throughout the novel, which is also dedicated to him.

342 Vol. 1, pp. vi–vii; hereafter cited by volume/page, for though the letters are numbered, many are very long.

343 I have not been able to obtain a copy, so what follows is based on Shepperson's description in *The Novel in Motley* and on Natalie Neill's

plot summary in issue 2 (2004) of the online journal *CW*[3]. It sounds as fun as *The Female Quixote* and deserves to be rescued from obscurity.

344 Page 184 in Gemmett's edition, hereafter cited by volume/chapter.

345 Vol. 2, chaps. 5 and 7 in Gemmett's edition. Both of Gemmett's editions have long introductions and copious notes.

346 Though dead a dozen years by this time, Samuel Johnson appears as the "loud, sonorous, and sententious" Mr. Gallstone, who says of Azemia: "this young thing's head is filled with agglomerated carnosities, generated by novels and romances. Let her get a good cookery book if she *will* read . . ." (2.2).

347 It was revised shortly before it was sold in the spring of 1803 to Crosby & Company, who sat on it for the next six years. On 5 April 1809 Austen wrote (under a pseudonym) to inquire about the inexplicable delay, wondered if they had lost the manuscript, and said if she didn't hear back she would offer it elsewhere. Richard Crosby snottily responded to say that because "there was not any time stipulated for its publication, neither are we bound to publish it," and threatened to sue if she sent it elsewhere. Another seven years passed, during which time Austen anonymously published her four major novels, until her brother Henry bought the rights back from Crosby & Co. in 1816 for the same amount they paid in 1803 (£10, about $1000 today). Henry didn't mention it was written by the well-regarded author of *Sense and Sensibility*, *Pride and Prejudice*, *Mansfield Park*, and *Emma* (1811–16)—serves the bastards right. Specialists disagree whether Austen made any substantial changes to the manuscript after 1803, aside from changing the heroine's name from Susan to Catherine and writing a brief preface in 1816 to explain the novel's delayed publication. It finally appeared in December 1817, five months after she died. The epistolary exchange between Austen and Crosby is reprinted in the Norton Critical Edition of *Northanger Abbey* (214–15), which will be cited hereafter by volume/chapter.

348 In a letter dated 28 September 1814 to her niece Anna, who had drafted a novel, Austen says of one character: "I wish you would not let him plunge into a 'vortex of dissipation.' I do not object to the thing, but I cannot bear the expression; it is such thorough novel slang—so old that I daresay Adam met with it in the first novel he opened."

349 Page 96 in Chapman's edition of Austen's *Minor Works*, where *Love and Freindship* occupies pp. 76–109.

350 *The Castle of Wolfenbach* (1793) and *The Mysterious Warning* (1796) by Eliza Parsons, *Clermont* (1798) by Regina Maria Roche, *The Necromancer* (1792) by Karl Kahlert, *The Midnight Bell* (1798) by Francis Lathom, *The Orphan of the Rhine* (1798) by Eleanor Sleath, and *Horrid Mysteries* (1791–95) by Carl Grosse. See pp. 120–23 above for a discussion of the ones by Kahlert and Grosse. I haven't shuddered through the others.

351 Tilney doesn't realize—as Austen probably did—that the better Gothic novelists create symbolic, expressionistic representations of psychological states and unbalanced personalities. Catherine is wrong about General Tilney murdering or immuring his wife, but she's not wrong to sense he's an arrogant tyrant (that is, the type who *would* do that if pushed too far). She just needs to learn to read Gothic novels metaphorically rather than literally.

352 Jacques Roubaud makes a similar self-conscious reference to the materiality of his medium in his charming critifiction *Hortense Is Abducted*: "The denouement is fast approaching. You can sense it by various clues, not the least of which is the relatively few number of pages left to be read" (chap. 34).

CHAPTER 5

The American Novel

It did not begin well, and it isn't ending well. The European invasion of the continent called "America" (on a mapmaker's whim) brought religious nuts to the northeast and greedy profiteers to the south: Puritanism and greed, the Jekyll and Hyde of the American story. Around 1619, some Dutch human traffickers brought the first slaves to Virginia, and instead of turning them away in moral outrage, the English colonists put them in chains. Georgia became the dumping ground for European criminals, Louisiana a penalty box for prostitutes and other undesirables. By the time Swift published *Gulliver's Travels* in 1726, the Yahoos outnumbered the Houyhnhnms, so to speak, and have dominated the guns-and-Bibles population ever since. (I understand they even have their own Web portal.) In the century following the Declaration of Independence, the United States of America didn't attract a brain-drain from Europe but rather its poor, huddled masses, its wretched refuse, while the descendants of those first settlers continued their invasion westward with broken treaties, germ warfare, and some hype about "manifest destiny." Yet from these reprehensible beginnings, from this unsavory melting pot, a minuscule minority of Americans each generation has devoted itself to writing literature, including some novels that, while imitative at first, would eventually match and occasionally surpass those of older nations.

It is difficult to identify the first American novel because it depends on what is meant by "American." Does it mean a novel about or set in America? One written by an American? One first published in America? It also depends on what is meant by "a novel." The distinctly American genre of the Indian captivity narrative has been called a precursor to the novel, even a kind of "female picaresque," Christopher Castiglia suggests, "an adventure story set, unlike most early American women's literature, outside the home" (4). The first and best known, *A True History of the Captivity and Restoration of Mrs. Mary Rowlandson* (1682), announces itself as a

nonfiction account of the abduction of a minister's wife from her Massachusetts home in 1676 by members of the Narragansett tribe, who were fed up with the "increasing European expansionism, discrimination, and enforced conversion to Christianity."[1] But Rowlandson (c. 1637–1711) fictionalizes her story not only by beribboning it with Bible verses to gussy it up as a Christian allegory, but by introducing an imaginary character as the protagonist: the work is not about her, she insists, but about "the works of the Lord and his wonderful power in carrying us along, preserving us in the wilderness while under the enemy's hand, and returning of us in safety again" (24). In fact, she gave her hero top billing in the original title of the book, *The Sovereignty and Goodness of God*. His goodness entails sending "heathens" (native Americans) to burn down her town, to slaughter or capture its inhabitants, and to mistreat Rowlandson as a prisoner of war for three months, to which she reacts not with resentment but with gratitude and admiration. She marvels at the rapidity with which he answers prayer: "My elder sister being yet in the house and seeing those woeful sights . . . said, 'And Lord, let me die with them,' which was no sooner said but she was struck with a bullet and fell down dead over the threshold" (13). Viewing her burnt house, she rejoices, "Come, behold the works of the Lord, what desolation he has made in the earth" (14).[2] So Rowlandson's work could be called fiction in that it features a fictitious protagonist who, like an abusive spouse, treats her badly for her own good (as she psychopathologically imagines), and a prejudiced narrator who unwittingly exposes the racism and religiosity that remain ugly facets of the American character to this day. But since Rowlandson and her handlers—the Puritan minister Increase Mather probably wrote the preface and perhaps edited the text—intended *A True History* to be a contribution to religion, not to literature, we should back away slowly from it, as you would from any religious nut. Most of the later captivity narratives are too short to be considered novels anyway.

At least *A True History* makes for compelling reading, which can't be said for *The History of the Kingdom of Basaruah* (1715), a tedious religious allegory by a third-generation Puritan minister named Joseph Morgan (1671–c. 1749). "If *Pilgrim's Progress* is to be reckoned as one of the early examples of the English novel," Richard Schlatter argues in the introduction

to his modern edition, "then *The History of the Kingdom of Basaruah* may well be called the first American novel" (3). He's got me there, for I do indeed reckon *The Pilgrim's Progress* to be a novel. As Morgan hints at the end of chapter 9 of his short work, it's closer to Bunyan's *Holy War*: an English ambassador retells the history of a country that "lies toward the north of America" called Basaruah (a Hebrew compound meaning Flesh-Spirit), which is essentially the story of the Puritan god's relationship with his people, from the Garden of Eden to the New Covenant to their transplantation to a "wilderness" (North America). It dramatizes Calvinist theology and doctrinal bickering by way of concepts rather than characters (as in *The Pilgrim's Progress*), resulting in stilted passages like this: "Some who came from the county of *Unjust Dealing* went on freely in the river till they came to the Gulf of *Restitution* (which those who came from that county were required to go over, and no other but they), and when they came to *this Gulf* they would not be persuaded to go over it but sheered along the streams of *Amendment for time to come*, till they came to one of the islands, where they remained till Mr. Maveth [Death] carried them to the *Lake of Fire*" (chap. 15). Morgan's novel may have some value as an aid to understanding 17th-century Puritan mentality – useful because, 300 years later, a sizable portion of the U.S. population still thinks that way – but it has little literary value, and like Rowlandson's tale belongs more to theology than to literature.

Along with religious allegories, we should also sidestep quasifictional epistolary works like Benjamin Franklin's *Silence Dogood Letters* (1726) and Jean de Crèvecoeur's *Letters from an American Farmer* (1782). Even though the latter is technically an epistolary novel, it originated as a series of essays, and like Franklin's squibs, it is more interesting for political/cultural reasons than for literary ones.[3] Same goes for Peter Markoe's *Algerine Spy in Pennsylavania* (1787), an example of the *Turkish Spy* genre warning Americans of unreal Islamic infiltrators and the very real kidnapping of Americans by pirates of the Barbary states (the young republic's first major foreign policy challenge, which it bungled). Nor does space permit quasifictional memoirs like *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano* (1789), the first American slave narrative. Like the

authors of Indian captivity narratives, Equiano did not deliberately set out to write a novel, and I'd prefer to stick with those who did.[4]

To return to the question of setting: in the early-modern period, "the Americas" referred to the entire western hemisphere, including the West Indies. For that reason, William Spengemann felt justified in calling Aphra Behn's *Oroonoko* (1688) "the earliest American novel," as I noted earlier, even though nowadays no one considers Surinam to be part of America per se. So first, we should limit "American" to North America, else we'd have to include such English novels as *Robinson Crusoe*, *Roderick Random*, and *Zeluco* that are partly set in "the Americas." Like immigration officers guarding the borders of American fiction, we should also turn away novels like *Moll Flanders*, Prévost's *Cleveland*, and Bage's *Hermsprong*, for though they are partly set in *North* America, their authors never set foot there. And for that reason, we can also reject the many forgotten novels set in America that were written and published in England and Europe in the 18th century. No foreigners allowed.

If we add residency as a requirement, the first American novel might be *The Life of Harriot Stuart* (1750) by Charlotte Lennox, the author of *The Female Quixote*. Born apparently in Gibraltar, Lennox moved with her family to upstate New York in 1739 and spent her tweens there before returning to England in 1742. Harriot is a precocious girl, both intellectually and sexually: by age 11, she has already read heroic French romances by Scudéry and La Calprenède and fancies herself "nothing less than a Clelia or Statira" (66) as she prematurely launches her career in coquetry. She's only 13 when she sails to New York with her family, flirting with almost every adult male on the ship and creating all sorts of problems for them and herself later on. About a quarter of *Harriot Stuart* is set in America, beginning with what Gustavus Maynadier in his booklet *The First American Novelist?* calls "the first notice in English fiction of 'the New York skyline' " (24). A shameless flirt by English standards, Harriot is surprised by the forwardness of New York City gals: "There is no place in the world where the women labour so much to attract the eyes of the men" (106), but all eyes are on Harriot when she arrives at the fort in Albany where her military father is stationed. There she encounters her first black slave (though born in New York, not imported from Africa), views an

encampment of Mohawk Indians outside Schenectady, and is even abducted by some of them during a kind of captivity narrative—though it turns out the group is led by one of her smitten suitors disguised as an Indian. (In an ironic twist, Lennox's Englishman is more barbaric than the supposedly barbaric Indians, most of whom are Christian and speak Dutch.) This colonial Lolita exhibits some of the qualities later associated with the American girl—confidence, independence, resourcefulness—qualities she takes back with her to England at the age of 14. (En route, she is captured by pirates, rescued by English sailors, and stabs a would-be rapist with his own sword, an act the crew wants to revenge with a gangbang.) The remainder of *Harriot Stuart* is set in England and France: "Her search for her rich aunt is disappointed and she is left without protection in London," her modern editor summarizes.[5] "She is befriended by members of the aristocracy who promise her patronage but soon abandon her. She then experiences a variety of sensational adventures, most of them prompted by her romantic involvements, and ends by marrying the man she loves"—whom she met on her first transatlantic voyage, a man entranced by what he calls her "almost infant beauties" (133). Since only a quarter of *Harriot Stuart* is set in America, and since Lennox spent only three years there, we shouldn't make too great a claim for it as an American novel, but for English readers in 1750s it was the most American novel on the market.

By virtue of its title alone, *The Female American* (1767) seems to stake a greater claim, though the unknown nationality of the author muddies the issue. The author's name on the title page, Unca Eliza Winkfield, is obviously a pseudonym, and it's uncertain whether the author was British or American, a man or a woman.[6] But what *is* certain is that *The Female American* is a fascinating, entertaining work, set mostly in and around Virginia in the 1640s. The author/narrator is the daughter of an English colonist and an Indian princess, a couple whose backstory closely resembles that of Pocahontas and John Rolfe. Unca Eliza—a hybrid name reflecting her biracial background—travels to England at age seven to be educated by her father's religious relations, where she experiences some prejudice because of her tawny skin, black hair, and quirky fashion sense (half Indian, half European). She returns to Virginia at age 18, but after her father dies six years later, she sets off for England again, only to be abandoned on a

deserted island off the coast of Virginia by a treacherous sea captain. There the narrative turns into a female version of *Robinson Crusoe*, as the author metafictionally winks: not only does the castaway come across a manuscript by a former inhabitant explaining how to survive on the island —which she uses just as the author used Defoe's novel—but the 17th-century narrator hopes "that some future bold adventurer's imagination, lighted up by my torch, will form a fictitious story of one of his own sex, the solitary inhabitant of a desolate island" (2.2). How cheeky of the author to suggest that the novel that obviously inspired *The Female American* actually inspired *it*!

The author seems intent on outdoing Crusoe's "strange, surprizing adventures." Unca Eliza discovers that the abandoned building she inhabits is part of a vast necropolis filled with mummies and coffins of virgin sacrifices, an extension of a temple to the sun-god that includes a giant, hollow statue used by duplicitous priests to deliver oracles to the credulous Indians who visit the island once a year. Deciding to convert these heathens to Christianity, she hides in the giant head (which amplifies voices like a megaphone) and scares the bejesus out of them when they make their annual visit. She begins preaching to them, and eventually tells them she is sending a woman to continue the conversion process; determined to make a spectacular entrance, Unca Eliza dolls herself up with abandoned priestly raiments and even belts out a hymn on the temple steps. (Like other religious hucksters, she's unconcerned about pulling a Wizard of Oz-type con job on the Indians in the name of religion.) Moving to their nearby island, she continues her missionary work for two years, "very happy among these plain, illiterate, honest people" (2.5), then returns to her own island one day to discover that her English cousin is there with a search party. Instead of running into his arms, she decides to have some fun; sneaking into the giant amplifying head, she belts out another hymn, then taunts her cousin before arranging some music for her big entrance (again dressed up like a priestess): she places her homemade Æolian harp in the head, which creates loud, ambient music that must have sounded like the Orb at Glastonbury in '93. The English sailors are terrified by the sight-and-sound spectacular and run back to their ship: "One of them said that Mr. Lock came on board in a terrible fright, and said he had seen a monster as tall as the moon, that it talked and sung louder than thunder, and that if he

had not run away, a she-devil would have run away with him; and as one of our men was rowing them back, they said they saw a hundred devils fly away with you all into the air whilst they saw a great devil playing upon the bagpipes, and he said that for that matter he played much better than ever he heard a Scotchman in his life" (2.7). Like Lennox exposing the barbarity of Englishmen, the author reveals that the "civilized" English are even more superstitious than the heathen Indians. Eventually the English cousin decides to remain there on the big island to help Unca Eliza with her missionary work, persuades her to marry him (which she does only for propriety's sake, not for love), and the novel concludes with the shipment of these memoirs to England, where (it is earlier implied) Daniel Defoe will discover them 70 years later.

The Female American raises a host of issues: biracial relationships, gender roles, intertextuality, and especially colonization, both political and religious. Early on, an Englishman admits "We have no right to invade the country of another, and I fear invaders will always meet a curse," and a page later an Indian chief tells Unca Eliza's English father, "the evil being who made you has sent you into our land to kill us; we know you not, and have never offended you; why then have you taken possession of our lands, ate our fruits, and made our countrymen prisoners? Had you no lands of your own? Why did you not ask? we would have given you some" (1.1). However, this pro-Indian attitude is undercut by Unca Eliza's missionary efforts: forsaking her heliocentric Indian religion for Christianity, she seems unaware that she is a traitor to her people, an enemy collaborator, utterly convinced their silly religion is inferior to her silly religion—they worship the sun, the visible sustainer of life; she worships an invisible, tripartite judge—and she goes so far as to destroy the temple of the sun and its oracle at the end, making her a destructive, imperialistic colonizer of the worst sort.

As I said, it's unclear whether the author was British or American; although there are detailed descriptions of the Virginia colony and Indian customs, they all could have come from books, as Burnham shows in her edition, which includes selections from such documents in the appendix. But the novel is certainly American in spirit: as Burnham writes in her introduction, "the author of *The Female American* articulated for readers on both sides of the Atlantic an often radical vision of race and gender through

an account of a biracial heroine who is able to indulge in a kind of 'rambling' mobility and 'extraordinary' adventure precisely because she is, as the title declares, an American female. . . . *The Female American* is, finally, a book about the potentially extraordinary possibilities of being both female and American" (24)—for better and for worse. She's a clever, independent woman, but also a colonial Elmer Gantry who proselytizes for "the evil being" who decimated her maternal heritage, and a sexless woman who marries only for social propriety. She writes on the first page that she decided to write about her early life because "the remembrance of it is burdensome to my memory, [and] I thought I might in some degree exonerate myself . . ." (1.1), which carries an intriguing and appropriate sense of guilt, the same guilty conscience over the mistreatment of Indians and slaves that haunts American literature to this day.

Frances Brooke, whom we met in chapter 4, sailed for Quebec in 1763 and there wrote what has been called "the first Canadian novel, and indeed the first American one."[7] *The History of Emily Montague* (1769) is an above-average epistolary romance novel set in Quebec and Montreal, and is filled with ravishing descriptions of the area in the 1760s, along with reports (sent by one of the characters' military father to an earl in England) on Canadian habits, politics, religion, agriculture, Indian relations, and the trouble brewing down south in the English colonies. All of this atypical material is grafted onto a rather typical love story: when 27-year-old Edward Rivers sails from England to Canada, his rakish friend envisions him "trying the force of your destructive charms on the savage dames of America, chasing females wild as the winds thro' woods as wild as themselves" (4), but unfortunately nothing like that happens. Instead, Rivers falls for the engaging but engaged Emily Montague, a beautiful 24-year-old orphan who arrived there from England two years earlier to stay with relatives. Her fiancé is a rich dolt, as she comes to realize after meeting Rivers with his "almost feminine sensibility" (155), so the first part of the novel concerns her weak efforts to break off her engagement (against the wishes of relatives and parents, naturally), and after that there are various complications that prevent her from marrying Rivers until the end. Brooke used the novel not only to report on life in Canada and its natural beauties—which are so appealing one suspects she was angling for a job

with the Canadian Tourism Commission—but also to air her views on love, marriage, sensibility, female education, etc. There are some references to the nearby Huron and Iroquois tribes, but most of the novel focuses on the small English colony in Quebec.

The real star of the show is Emily's witty BFF Arabella Fermor—named after the real-life model for Belinda in Pope's "Rape of the Lock"—who delivers a number of memorable one-liners. Quoting Pope in fact, Bell dismisses Emily's first fiancé as "that *white curd of ass's milk* " (155), and mocking French Canadian women for their ignorance, she writes (to Edwards's sister back in England), "There are two ladies in the province, I am told, who read; but both of them are above fifty, and they are regarded as prodigies of erudition" (16). She resorts to fashion to describe the differences between religions: "the Romish religion is like an overdressed, tawdry, rich citizen's wife; the Presbyterian like a rude, awkward country girl; the Church of England like an elegant, well-dressed woman of quality, 'plain in her neatness' (to quote Horace, who is my favorite author)" (33). The city of Quebec "is like a third- or fourth-rate country town in England" (45), and taking up the Canadian habit of drinking to keep warm in winter, she avers, "Certainly brandy makes a woman talk like an angel" (49). Rivers has some good lines too: noting that Huron women have many more rights than Englishwomen, he admits, "In the truest sense of the word, *we* are the savages" (11), and even encourages women to revolt: "I don't think you are obliged in conscience to obey laws you have had no share in making; your plea would certainly be at least as good as that of the Americans, about which we every day hear so much" (11). If Brooke had wedded her Canadian material to a more original story, *Emily Montague* would be far more interesting. By turns charming and maudlin, though marred by a sentimental subplot near the end, the novel offered English readers their first glimpse of Canada in fiction, and served as a sourcebook for stay-at-home English novelists for decades. But Brooke moved back to England in 1767, so her status as an *American* novelist, like Lennox's, is tenuous.

The first American novel, in the opinion of critic Robert H. Elias, is none of the above, but rather the rascally *Adventures of Alonso* (1775) by Marylander Thomas Atwood Digges (1742–1821).[8] Patriotic Americans,

however, may not want to salute as their founding fiction a novel that involves adultery, transvestism, smuggling, and homosexuality by a Catholic who was disowned by his family, imprisoned for debt in Dublin, and arrested for shoplifting in Scotland. The short novel concerns a Portuguese merchant's son who runs away with a married woman named Eugenia (disguised as a man), blows through their money in France, deposits her in a convent to try his fortune in Brazil, is caught smuggling a diamond, escapes and engages in further contraband operations in the Caribbean, attempts to return to Spain but is intercepted by Algerian pirates who sell him to a gay Moor named Aldalid, fends off his advances and manages to return to Portugal, only to find Eugenia has just died, and so returns to the family business, as his father originally intended. What distinguishes it from other routine adventure novels are Alonso's sharp criticisms of the policies of the Portuguese prime minister, which easily apply to the American policies of the British prime minister, Lord North, in the years leading up to the revolution. So even though the novel doesn't take place in North America, it is revolutionary-American in spirit as Alonso rails against trade restrictions, unlawful seizure of property, and the lack of personal freedom under a tyrannical government. (Not surprisingly, Digges spied for Benjamin Franklin during the Revolutionary War, delivered secret dispatches to John Adams, and was a personal friend of George Washington, one of the few invited to his funeral.) Nonetheless, because *Adventures of Alonso* is set outside North America, and because Digges seems to have spent more time in Portugal and England (where the novel was published) than in the U.S., its claim as the first American novel is as compromised as Donna Eugenia's honor.

A London publication and unidentified author also compromise another short novel that is otherwise as American as corn on the cob: *Adventures of Jonathan Corncob, Loyal American Refugee* (1787). This is an extraordinary novel, the closest thing in 18th-century English fiction to Voltaire's *Candide* because of its lively style, freethinking attitude, and urbane ribaldry. It is so fresh and frank that it reads more like a modern imitation of an 18th-century novel, like *The Sot-Weed Factor* or *Mason & Dixon*, than one actually written back then, which is to say it's far more realistic than other so-called realistic novels of the period. (In his foreword to David Godine's bicentennial edition, Noel Perrin compares it to *Catch-*

22.) Set during the Revolutionary War, it may have been written (as narrator Corncob relates) years later by an exiled American who had supported the British, for it displays the kind of detailed knowledge of Boston and New York that can't be worked up from books (as in the case of *The Female American*); but the few critics who have written about the novel feel that its extensive use of nautical terms and insider knowledge of the corrupt workings of the British Admiralty suggest the author was a British naval officer stationed in America during the war. Although this resembles the argument some used to make that Shakespeare must have been a lawyer because of his familiarity with the law, it's clear that the author spent at least as much time in America as Lennox or Brooke, so let's just call him an Anglo-American and move on.

Perrin conveniently summarizes *Jonathan Corncob* in the raffish tone of its author:

> The hero is a Massachusetts farm boy who got mixed up in the American Revolution as a result of making a girl on the next farm pregnant. Given the choice of marrying Miss Desire Slawbunk or paying a fifty-pound fine, he runs away to Boston. (It's a quick trip, because he gets a ride most of the way on the back of a passing moose.)
>
> Soon he is serving on an American privateer. Soon after that on a British man-o'-war. And presently he winds up in New York City, making cattle raids into New Jersey with a group of Loyalists and personal raids on a New York society girl named Dinah Donewell. . . .
>
> After recovering from the six or eight kinds of venereal disease she gives him, he hurries off to further adventures—with a more common Rhode Island girl named Dolly, with slaves and slave-owners in the Barbadoes, with a Royal Navy officer who is one of the few combatants in the American Revolution even more cowardly than Jonathan himself. When the book rather abruptly ends, he is back in New York. He is reunited with Desire Slawbunk, now the widow of a British company commander and more amorous than ever. He is in several kinds of trouble, as usual.[9]

It's stuffed with vintage Americana: backwoods superstition, bundling, tar-and-feathering, a fifer playing "Yankee Doodle," dialect and obsolete slang,

paranoid patriotism, demeaning references to Christopher Columbus, defense-budget scams, depreciating currency, racism—all narrated in offhandedly precise language. Instead of writing that he was "taken into custody by six militiamen," as most 18th-century novelists would, Corncob adds, "with ragged coats and rusty muskets," details conveying the straitened state of American troops during the war. When Corncob meets Rhode Island Dolly, the author declares independence from the British novelese of the day:

> Any other author who, like me, had been in love with the lady, would tell you that the lily disputed with the rose the empire of her face; that her lips were coral, and her teeth two rows of oriental pearl; that her nose was well formed and inclined to the aquiline; that her large blue eyes were of the sleepy kind "that spoke the melting soul";[10] that her hair was auburn, and that she was above the middle size; but I who, unlike most historians, paint from nature, will candidly confess that she was a smart little brunette with sparkling black eyes, and that if she was not pretty, she was very much to my taste. (9)

She's certainly an improvement on Desire Slawbunk, who "had lost six of her front teeth above, and six below" due to her fondness for molasses (2). The author brilliantly recreates what it looked, felt, and smelt like to live under wartime conditions in cities, aboard a ship, in prison, and down in Barbados—the scene of some shockingly casual examples of racism and the abuse of slaves ("black cattle"), anticipating Mark Twain in many ways.[11]

In addition to Voltaire, Smollett often comes to mind, as does Sterne, whom a character says Corncob physically resembles, especially when it comes to sexual innuendo: "As my youngest sister was extremely pretty, I was soon after this affair appointed acting purser of a frigate going to Barbadoes" (12). More often, the author eschews winking reticence like that for more explicit descriptions of sexual encounters, often spicing them up with blasphemous citations from the Bible. After Corncob has coitus with Dinah Donewell—who suffers from epileptic fits, realistically described—she quotes a verse from the Song of Solomon in postcoital bliss ("Behold thou art fair, my beloved, yea thou art pleasant; also our bed is

green" [1.16]), but when Corncob learns that she has given him the clap, he realizes she has been servicing "those British officers who, according to the words of Ezekiel, are 'captains and rulers, clothed most gorgeously, horsemen riding upon horses, and all of them desirable young men—whose flesh is as the flesh of asses, and their issue as the issue of horses' " (5; Ezek. 23:20 ["flesh"=penis, "issue"=ejaculation]). Playing "at a kind of religious conundrums," Dinah's mother asks him " 'what was the candle of the Lord, searching the inward parts of the belly?' I blushed at the question, and though I thought it not difficult to divine, was silent" (6; see Proverbs 20:27 for the non-phallic answer).

The author reaches the height of blasphemy in the concluding chapter, "In Which It Is Proved, to the Satisfaction of the Most Captious, that the Most Advantageous Kind of Study is Novel Reading." Corncob is puzzled that *non*fiction writers—who, unlike novelists, supposedly deal with facts—often contradict each other, beginning with the New Testament: "In Matthew and Mark we met with some passages, which, if not according exactly, were stumbling-blocks to our weak reason; . . . I read on, and towards the conclusion of Luke, found that this Evangelist counted two young men dressed in white in the holy sepulchre, though St. Mark had said there was only one. [¶] I paused and laid down the book . . ." (19). He then turns to scientific and historical books, only to find the same sorts of contradictions. The novel concludes: "Disappointed everywhere in my search of truth, I determined to give it up, and have since read nothing but novels. As in works of this kind I expect only fiction, whenever I meet with a just observation, or a character drawn after nature, I consider it a clear gain. I advice my reader to follow my example, and assure him that in that part of the adventures of Jonathan Corncob he has already perused, as well as in the sequel I may hereafter offer to the public, there is more truth than is sometimes to be found in books with more promising titles." To argue that novels are superior to serious nonfiction and even to the Bible itself was a bold, heretical thing to say in 1787, worthy of tar-and-feathering, if not worse. (Perhaps that's why the author published it anonymously.) He never wrote that sequel, but *Adventures of Jonathan Corncob* is easily the best novel written about America before the 1790s, and given its breakthrough realism and spunky iconoclasm, it is one of the most daring novels of the entire 18th century.

The winner of the American novel trifecta—the first set in the U.S., published in the U.S., and written by an author born in the U.S.A.—is *The Power of Sympathy; or, The Triumph of Nature* (1789) by Bostoner William Hill Brown (1765–93). Unfortunately, it's not very good, merely a derivative, didactic novel of sensibility, a genre that was passé by 1789, as a snarky 14-year-old girl in the novel points out: "I abominate everything that is sentimental—it is so unfashionable too."[12] Like most young authors, Brown wears his influences on his sleeve; the novel is *Clarissa* meets *A Sentimental Journey* meets *The Sorrows of Young Werther*. The latter two are actually named in the novel, and the first is obvious from its form (epistolary) and tragic, moralistic content: a young man named Harrington boasts to his friend Worthy (an ideal man, as his unsubtle name indicates) that he plans to seduce an orphaned 16-year-old named Harriot, but he is so impressed by her virtuous composure that he decides to marry her instead, against his father's wishes. She falls in love with him as well, but days before their wedding, it is soap-operatically revealed that they are half-brother and -sister. (Harrington's father had seduced a woman unsubtly named after Sterne's Maria.) Harriot is so shocked at how close she came to committing incest that she sickens and dies; Harrington is so bereaved that he shoots himself, a copy of *Werther* next to him.[13] This is to warn the "young ladies of United Columbia," as the author poetically addresses them on the dedication page, "of the fatal consequences of SEDUCTION," which is often printed in scare caps in the text. Supporting the main story-line are several subsidiary examples of sex outside of marriage, which in this novel (as in modern antisex propaganda) *always* ends in pregnancy, madness, and/or death for the ladies, and remorse or suicide for the men. (The author of *Jonathan Corncob* would have added STDs, but sadly *The Power of Sympathy* is not that kind of novel.)

The writing is so stylized and over-the-top that one suspects young Goodman Brown intended a parody of sentimental novels, especially when we learn that in company he was not a stern moralist but "a little satyrical at times . . . witty and winning."[14] Although some of the novel's incidents were based on real scandals of the day, an aura of unreality hangs over it all,

especially near the end when Harrington's father has a vision of hell and other characters wax histrionic. Brown doesn't make much of the American setting (Boston mostly); near the beginning, when Harrington still plans to seduce rather than marry Harriot, he jokes that "I am not so much a republican as formally to wed any person of this class," that is, a "daughter of the democratic empire of virtue" – which recalls the aristocratic status of most seducers in British novels – but he changes politics after he falls in love, and begins railing against class distinctions and inequality. "I like a democratical better than any other kind of government," he announces, and goes on to condemn the "aristocratic temper" of Southerners, insisting that slavery is incompatible with democratic principles (17). Aside from these few remarks and a reference to Noah Webster's Grammatical Institute, *The Power of Sympathy* is mostly set in Novelland.

Throughout the first half, there are numerous critifictional discussions about the most suitable kinds of novels for young ladies, and everyone agrees that the best are in essence conduct books in fictional form. A widow who dispenses most of the advice in this novel explains: "Didactic essays are not always capable of engaging the attention of young ladies. We fly from the laboured precepts of the essayist to the sprightly narrative of the novelist" (29). But 14-year-old Miss Bourn shrugs, "I read as much as anybody, and though it may afford amusement while I am employed, I do not remember a single word when I lay down the book," which confirms an older male character's conviction that novels are "just calculated to kill time —to attract the attention of the reader for an hour, but leave not one idea on the mind" (11). Didactic conduct book or idle amusement: the novel as *literature* is an alien concept to these characters, if not to their author. Brown seems to have written *The Power of Sympathy* not as a dire warning to young ladies to just say no, but as an opportunity to pay homage to a few of his favorite novels—Worthy praises *A Sentimental Journey*, and suicidal Harrington writes like Werther—while tattling on some local adulterers. It was a commercial flop. *The Power of Sympathy* is a young man's book, written for young ladies, and published in a young republic that didn't yet know what novels are for.[15]

For clergyman and historian Jeremy Belknap (1744–98), the novel was the means by which he could have some fun with American history. Written

in between his serious nonfiction books, *The Foresters: An American Tale* (1792) is a sardonic allegory of the history of the United States, from Sir Walter Raleigh's colonization of Virginia in 1587 to George Washington's first presidential term, in the form of 16 letters from a man named Amynter to a friend.[16] The title page announces itself as a sequel to Arbuthnot's *John Bull*: it turns out Bull owns a neglected tract of land called the Forest, though he had no right "to call the land his, for he had no legal title to it" (1). Hearing about the land, a servant named Walter Pipeweed (Raleigh) asks to settle there, as does an apprentice named Cecilius Peterson (the Catholic Lord Baltimore), followed by others like Peregrine Pickle—not Smollett's guy but a figure for the Pilgrims—until all 13 colonies have been allegorically settled. It's not a noble endeavor: there are border disputes, doctrinal bickering among the religious nuts, and conflicts with the Native Americans, whom Belknap dehumanizes into bears and wolves to reflect the English invaders' inhuman attitude toward them. (As in *Jonathan Corncob*, slaves are called "black cattle.") Belknap holds his nose at the kinds of people Bull sent to Pipeweed in Virginia: "he made it a practice every year to present him with a wagonload of ordure ["Convicts"—author's note], the sweepings of his backyard, the scrapings of his dog kennel, and contents of his own water closet" (1). Rev. Belknap also mocks the ridiculously rigid Pilgrims:

> The family and all its concerns were under very exact regulations: not one of them was suffered to peep out of doors after the sun was set. It was never allowed to brew on Saturday, lest the beer should break the Fourth Commandment by working on Sunday; and once it is said the stallion was impounded a whole week for having held *crim. con.* with the mare while the Old Gentleman was at his devotions. (2; *crim. con.*=criminal conversation=coitus)

As things get more complicated, Belknap brings back from Arbuthnot's novel characters like Lewis (France), Nic Frog (Holland), and Lord Strut (Spain) to allegorize the colonies' relations with Europe, and then retells the War of Independence as a protracted lawsuit—prosecuted more vigorously by Bull's wife (Parliament) than by Bull himself (the English people).

Despite the cartoonish conflicts, the new republic is off to a good start by the end of the novel, though the narrator foresees further problems with the "bears and wolves" and expresses disgust at the rats (financial speculators) that are already gnawing away at the country's foundations.

The second half of *The Foresters* is less novelistic than the first half—largely because groups replace colorful individuals, and because historical events are less imaginatively allegorized—but it is obvious that Belknap felt the novel format licensed a freedom of expression not allowed in his straight history books; if he refers to a Dutchman in one of them, I'm sure it's not as "a sly, evasive whoreson" (4). Belknap published it anonymously, he confided to a friend, for "I shall take great liberty, and tell some sad truths, in pretty coarse language" (Eitner, 157). In addition to Arbuthnot's *John Bull*, *The Foresters* looks back to British allegorical novels like Swift's *Tale of a Tub* and Smollett's *Adventures of an Atom*, and forward to American political satires as diverse as James Fenimore Cooper's *Monikins*, Robert Coover's *Political Fable*, and Philip Roth's *Our Gang*.

In 1791, Susanna Rowson (1762–1824) published a short novel that flopped in England but soared into best-sellerdom when republished in Philadelphia in 1794, *Charlotte Temple*.[17] Like Lennox, Rowson was an Anglo-American: she was born in England, came to America as a child, left as a teenager, then returned in 1793 as a married woman, and (again like Lennox) was an actress as well as a prolific writer. Like *The Power of Sympathy* (but worse), *Charlotte Temple* is a novel about seduction: our naïve heroine is a 15-year-old boarding-school girl who first caught the roving eye of an army lieutenant named Montraville at age 13; now considering her ripe for plucking, he enlists the help of Charlotte's French teacher to seduce her and take her away to New York. There he abandons the British schoolgirl for a rich, independent American woman; Charlotte follows the standard seduced-woman trajectory—pregnancy, madness, death—and her abductors are punished with remorse (Montraville) and death (the *female* French teacher). It's basically a YA novel—the Library of Congress categorizes it under "Teenage runaways—Fiction"—and of interest only as a pop-cultural phenomenon, not as a work of literature, for *Charlotte Temple* doesn't do anything that wasn't done better by earlier British sentimental novelists. (The New York setting is merely a novelty—

it's not described in any way—though it undoubtedly added to its popularity in America.) Charlotte herself is a bore: a passive, easily manipulated naïf who speaks in clichés, a sad paper doll rather than an interesting character.

There's one near-artistic moment in the novel: still virginal in England, Charlotte receives a letter from Montraville on which the sealing wax is still malleable. Propriety tells her she shouldn't open it, but her teacher encourages her to do so, and Charlotte figures she can read it, reseal it, and return it as though unread. " 'At any rate I am determined not to answer it,' continued Charlotte, as she opened the letter" (7). Perfect. But Rowson can't leave that alone: "Here let me stop to make one remark," she intrudes (as she often does) to moralize for a paragraph, not trusting the reader to apprehend the moral of the moment, which Marian Rush smartly explicates in her introduction to the recent Norton Critical Edition: "As it turns out, such resealing is not as easy as it looks: of a letter, of the virginal body it metonymizes, or of past mistakes that continually intrude themselves upon one's present in the form of misfortune and sorrowful memory" (xiv). Rowson's heavy-handed treatment is didactic, not artistic.

She wrote the novel quickly for money, and at certain metafictional points is self-defensive about its weaknesses. Chapter 28 begins, " 'Bless my heart,' cries my young, volatile reader, 'I shall never have patience to get through these volumes, there are so many ahs! and ohs! so much fainting, tears, and distress, I am sick to death of the subject.' " (You and me both, girlfriend.) Deservedly worried about what male book reviewers who "love to cavil at every trifling omission" will say, Rowson halts her sob story in chapter 30 to explain why Charlotte didn't have anything to sell during her final period of poverty, then sniffs, "I hope, Sir, your prejudices are now removed in regard to the probability of my story? Oh they are. Well then, with your leave, I will proceed." She proceeds to have Charlotte's father improbably appear with no explanation of how he could have located her, and Rowson's cardboard characters continue to speak in an improbable manner: misled into thinking that Charlotte has become a prostitute, Montraville cannot believe "that a mind once so pure as Charlotte Temple's should so suddenly become the mansion of vice" (chap. 34). The "mansion of vice"?! The hack author may have thought it would be "literary" to oppose the religious-sounding "Temple" with the big-city "mansion," but didn't realize how ludicrous that would sound in the mouth of a skirt-

chasing soldier. But this is like shooting fish in a barrel. As Leslie Fiedler noted years ago, *Charlotte Rowson* is a novel that "barely climbs above the lower limits of literacy" (68), one that was intended, the author tells us in her preface, not for adults but "for the perusal of the young and thoughtless of the fair sex." Unless that describes you, it should be ignored.[18]

Marginally better though equally didactic is another best-selling tale of seduction addressed to "the American fair," *The Coquette* (1797) by Massachusetts-born Hannah Foster (1758–1840). Like *The Power of Sympathy*, it is an epistolary novel in rather stilted language, based on a real-life scandal, which likewise names its primary literary inspiration. "I do not think you seducible," a friend taunts the coquette of the title, warning her about the rake she's seeing; "nor was Richardson's Clarissa, till she made herself the victim, by her own indiscretion. Pardon me, Eliza, this is a second Lovelace."[19] The Lovelace of this purse-size *Clarissa* is a Connecticut dandy named Peter Sanford, one of two men who take a sexual interest in 30-something Eliza Wharton after the man she had been dutifully, reluctantly engaged to dies. One is a boring clergyman named Boyer, whom Eliza strings along while she parties with the more entertaining Sanford. Rev. Boyer knows she's not right for him, but he's under her spell: "With all the boasted fortitude and resolution of our sex," he confesses to a friend, "we are mere machines. Let love once pervade our breasts, and its object may mould us into any form that pleases her fancy, or even caprice" (39). For "love" read "lust," the same magnet that attracts Eliza to Sanford against her better judgment. You can guess the rest: she loses the clergyman, is seduced by the rake, goes through pregnancy/madness/death, and afterwards the rake feels remorse. Near the end, Eliza summarizes her problem in the manner of a critic reviewing her "sad story": "But the cause may be found in that unrestrained levity of disposition, that fondness for dissipation and coquetry which alienated the affections of Mr. Boyer from me. This event fatally depressed and enfeebled my mind. I embraced with avidity the consoling power of friendship ensnaringly offered by my seducer" (67). She admits "sensual gratification" was involved. Like Clarissa, she leaves behind explanatory letters, and broadcasts the moral of the novel when she tells off her seducer: "May my unhappy story serve as a beacon to warn the American fair of the

dangerous tendency and destructive consequences of associating with men of your character, of destroying their time, and risking their reputation by the practice of coquetry and its attendant follies" (70).

It comes as a surprise to learn on the final page—which transcribes Eliza's tombstone—that she is 37; the novel spans four or five years (the letters aren't dated), but during that time Eliza acts more like an irresponsible teenager than a woman in her thirties. She describes herself as "naturally cheerful, volatile, and unreflecting" (2), but later we learn she's well read and takes an interest in politics; she's smart enough to know she shouldn't associate with Sanford—as everyone tells her, repeatedly, in their letters—but dumb enough to let herself get knocked up. Still a virgin in her thirties, she's a complicated mess, stuck between a rake and a hard place (she'll die of boredom if she marries the clergyman), all of which makes her more interesting than the average seduced heroine. Though the letters are postmarked from towns in Connecticut and Massachusetts, there's no local color, only a specimen of slang ("the show is over, as we Yankees say") and a self-referential remark by Sanford about "the aborigines of the country, which are said to worship the devil with fear" (70), which recalls Lovelace's demonic nature. Like Rowson, Foster doesn't trust her readers to grasp the obvious message about avoiding bad boys, harping upon it so loudly and so often that it drowns out the novel's few points of interest, as when one of Eliza's correspondents metafictionally assesses *The Coquette*: "Your truly romantic letter came safe to hand. Indeed, my dear, it would make a very pretty figure in a novel. A bleeding heart, slighted love, and all the *et ceteras* of romance enter into the composition" (48).

While female American novelists embroidered the predictable et ceteras of romance, their male counterparts pursued the less predictable et ceteras of adventure. Royall Tyler (1757–1826), a Boston playwright and jurist—said to be the model for Judge Jaffrey Pyncheon in Hawthorne's *House of Seven Gables*—takes on adventure novels and idealism in *The Algerine Captive; or, The Life and Adventures of Doctor Updike Underhill* (1797). This inventive novel is America's first Menippean satire, the genre that includes Rabelais' *Gargantua and Pantagruel*, Butler's *Hudibras*, and Sterne's *Tristram Shandy*—all cited in the novel's chapter epigraphs. Like them, it contrasts the world of learning with the real world and exposes the impracticality of intellectual structures when interacting with those whose

claims to intellect are weak, which describes most of the characters in Tyler's novel. Playing along with his fellow American novelists in claiming that his novel is based on fact (to give greater legitimacy to a genre people still distrusted for being imaginative), Tyler has narrator Underhill begin with a defense of his 17th-century ancestor, John Underhill—a real person (1597–1672) whom Jeremy Belknap writes about in his *History of New Hampshire*. He was a refractory Indian-killer who came afoul of the Puritans, whose original ideals about religious toleration quickly deteriorated into theocratic intolerance once they attained power. John Underhill, his fictional descendant tells us, was accused of adultery: not the real thing but "adultery of the heart" (see Matt. 5:28) for gazing at a woman wearing "a pair of wanton open workt gloves, slit at the thumbs," which are regarded by his accusers as "Satan's port holes of firy temptations."[20] These Puritan mullahs prepare Underhill (and the reader) for the authentic Islamic ones he'll meet later.

The classical ideals of Harvard next come under attack as young Updike is given a totally useless education in Greek and Latin, whose literary works fill his head with impractical notions and serve only to alienate him from others. (One young lady is insulted when he applies the classical epithet "ox-eyed" to her.) His lofty dreams of becoming a respected schoolteacher fail when he is assigned to a classroom of rowdy kids who mock him and eventually burn down the schoolhouse. Updike Underhill trains to become a physician (shades of the similarly alliterative Roderick Random here) but has trouble competing with the quacks and incompetents entrenched in New England. The few patients he attracts are comically sad: "It was however four months before I had any practice, except the extracting of a tooth from a corn-fed girl who spun at my lodgings, who used to look wistfully at me and ask, if the doctorer did not think the toothache a sign of love? and say she felt dreadfully all over; and the application of a young virgin in the neighbourhood, who wished to be favoured with a private lecture upon the virtues of the savin bush" (1.19—an abortifacient).

So he travels southward—visiting Benjamin Franklin in Philadelphia—only to be appalled by the slavery and antiintellectualism he finds down south. Becoming the first of many American innocents abroad, Underhill then sails to England as a ship's doctor, and after making some harsh

observations about the English people (and Thomas Paine) he reluctantly accepts a berth in a slave ship heading for Africa. The captain of the ironically named *Sympathy* fears Underhill is "moved by some *Yankee nonsense about humanity*" (1.31), as indeed he is when he sees how the civilized British and Americans treat their African captives. "I thought of my native land and blushed" (1.30), ashamed that a country that had just fought a revolution in the name of liberty would impose slavery on others. Then Underhill gets a taste of it himself: he is captured by Barbary pirates and sold into slavery. One more romantic veil drops when he realizes that Algerian captivity is not what "the dramatist and the novelist had taught me to expect" (2.3). Instead of sharing a cell with a kidnapped aristocrat and making a dramatic escape with the help of an Muslim princess, he is sentenced to years of hard labor under deplorable conditions. He is offered a reprieve if he'll convert to Islam, but Christianity is an unrealistic ideal he's not willing to abandon, even though he fails to defend it very well during a lengthy discussion with a mullah. After a few years Underhill achieves some freedom of movement as a doctor's assistant, travels to Egypt and sees the sights—the fabled city of Alexandria is not what his classical sources led him to expect—and eventually is ransomed and sent back to America.

The first half of *The Algerine Captive* is an amusing satire of American types and foibles, but the tone darkens as the tale moves southward and then overseas, a reflection of Underhill's growing maturity. His impractical readings in Greek and Latin literature give way to hard facts as he delivers numerous lectures to the reader about the Barbary states: its history, politics, economics, customs, and so on, along with overviews of Islam and Muhammad fair-minded enough to earn Tyler charges of apostasy by some book reviewers. Underhill develops a new appreciation of the America that had exasperated him earlier—"A slave myself, I have learned to appreciate the blessings of freedom" (2.11)—and the novel ends with his hope to become "a useful physician, a good father, and worthy FEDERAL citizen" (2.37). He's free again, but as Cathy Davidson notes, "The burden of this freedom is that he must now devote himself to *improving* the American society that he earlier saw as meriting only condemnation, derision, and evasion" (284). Like the protagonist of any picaresque bildungsroman, Underhill initially has trouble seeing his country for what it is, brilliantly

symbolized in an episode in which he befriends a young man, blind from birth, whose eyesight is restored. “When the operation was completed, and he was permitted to look around him, he was violently agitated,” as is Underhill when he leaves home and encounters the outside world, but the eye patient gradually learns to adjust his preconceived notion of the world to the visible one. “It was an interesting scene,” Underhill comments (1.9).[21] *The Algerine Captive* provides an eye-opening look at America during its first decades of independence as the young country tries, like Underhill (and like the allegorical figures in Belknap’s *Foresters*), to reconcile the classically inspired ideals of the Founding Fathers with the realities of governing a diverse population of rubes, phonies, and slave-holders.

The Algerine Captive is one of the most important American novels of this early period precisely because it presents itself as an *American* novel. In the preface, Underhill expresses surprise that novels have become so popular during his absence (1788–95), but is disappointed to learn they are either English (he mentions Radcliffe’s Gothics) or English-inspired (he implies those by Brown, Rowson, Foster, and lesser talents):

> While this love of literature, however frivolous, is pleasing to the man of letters, there are two things to be deplored. The first is that, while so many novels are vended, they are not of our own manufacture. . . . The second misfortune is that novels, being the picture of the times, the New England reader is insensibly taught to admire the levity, and often the vices, of the parent country. . . . If the English novel does not inculcate vice, it at least impresses on the young mind an erroneous idea of the world in which she is to live. It paints the manners, customs, and habits of a strange country; excites a fondness for false splendour; and renders the homespun habits of her own country disgusting.
>
> There are two things wanted, said a friend to the author: that we write our own books of amusement, and that they exhibit our own manners. Why then do you not write the history of your own life? The first part of it, if not highly interesting, would at least display a portrait of New England manners, hitherto unattempted. (6)

Deliberately echoing Fielding's new "species of writing, which I have affirmed to be hitherto unattempted in our language," *The Algerine Captive*, like *Joseph Andrews*, represents a reset of the novel, recalculated for an American setting. When Underhill visits the Harvard Museum, he is disappointed to find "the curiosities of all countries but our own" (1.17); his creator urges his fellow American novelists to start filling the museums of literature with curiosities of their own, for the "homespun habits" of Americans are interesting enough that they need not continue to rely on the parent country for material. *The Algerine Captive* is a prime exhibit of what an *American* novel could be.[22] Unfortunately, copies were scarce and it rather quickly became something of a museum piece, for in 1822 James Fenimore Cooper wrote, "Any future collector of our national tales would do well to snatch [it] from oblivion, and to give [it] that place among the memorials of other days which is due to the early and authentic historians of a country" (quoted by Davidson, 291). It wasn't until 2002 that a major U.S. publisher reissued it, right after the 9/11 attacks made *The Algerine Captive* relevant for laying "bare a culture clash and diplomatic quagmire not unlike the one that obtains between the United States and Muslim nations today," as the back cover opportunistically but accurately claims.

Even at this early stage we see American novelists choosing one or the other of the two roads that Western novelists have followed ever since the Greeks and Romans. In France, it was D'Urfé's Way or Sorel's Way; in England, Richardson's Way versus Fielding's Way – which is essentially Cervantes' Way, except that the Spaniard traveled both roads: *Don Quixote* resembles the Roman novels of Petronius and Apuleius, while *Persiles and Sigismunda* imitates Greek romances. In the United States, the two paths might be called Rowson's Way and Corncob's Way – that is, mainstream versus unorthodox fiction – one or the other of which most American novelists travel to this day. By now it should be obvious which of the two roads offers the more unusual sights and attractions, but it's equally obvious which offers more riches and fame: *Charlotte Temple* has been recently canonized in a Norton Critical Edition, while *Jonathan Corncob* has been out of print for years.

Scant popular success came to the most daring and significant American novelist of this period, Charles Brockden Brown (1771–1810). Trained in Philadelphia as an attorney, Brown abandoned the law at age 22 and moved two years later to New York City to become a professional writer, perhaps the first to chase that romantic dream.[23] Insanely prolific, working on several books at once, he published seven novels between 1798 and 1801 (along with a lost one intriguingly entitled *Sky-Walk* and two unfinished novels). Brown was initially inspired by the works of English Jacobin writers, especially Godwin's *Caleb Williams* and Bage's *Hermsprong*, and his first published novel—a short fictionalized dialogue on women's rights entitled *Alcuin* (1798)—shows the influence of Wollstonecraft. He must also have read German Gothic thrillers like Schiller's *Ghost-seer*, Tschink's *Victim of Magical Delusion*, and Kahlert's *Necromancer*, for their influence is palpable in his first major novel, *Wieland; or, The Transformation: An American Tale* (1798). But Brown transcends his sources in this bizarrely original novel, a study in religious mania and epistemology set in Pennsylvania.

Everything about this nightmarish novel is odd and unsettling, keeping the reader off-balance and disoriented, beginning with the veracity of the novel. In the preface the author blurs the distinction between truth and fiction by admitting "the incidents related are extraordinary and rare" but insisting in the next paragraph that they are based on a real-life incident (in which a New York man claimed an angel ordered him to murder his wife and four children). As the novel begins, the reader is uncertain who exactly is narrating—someone identified only as a "Lady" in the preface—and proper names are withheld for an unusually long time: not until halfway through the novel do we learn her name is Clara Wieland, and it's another 50 pages before we learn her brother is named Theodore—either of whom could be the eponym of the title, for it's her story as much as his. The pacing seems off, disjointed, as Clara admits: "What but ambiguities, abruptness, and dark transitions can be expected from the historian who is, at the same time, the sufferer of these disasters?"[24] Parts of the narrative are rushed while others occur in slow-motion, and instead of building to a climax, it delivers a series of electrical shocks, beginning in the first chapter when a character seems to spontaneously combust. The diction is odd –

stagy, sometimes biblical – filled with unusual words like "fane" and "flagitious" and obsolete verbs ("he hasted to the city"). At times it scans as Poëtic verse ("Why was my mind absorbed in thoughts ominous and dreary?"). Short, choppy sentences alternate with longer ones whose syntax is gnarled and clotted, with a preponderance of passive constructions ("Of self-defense I was incapable"). Occasionally it reads like a bad translation from the German. Chapters break off unexpectedly in the middle of scenes, or seem misdivided (any other writer would have ended chapter 23 with the sixth or seventh paragraph of chapter 24). All of these strategies brilliantly convey the difficulty Clara is having telling her tale. (The concluding chapter, which she writes three years later in a calmer mood, is stylistically smoother – and duller.)

And what a tale the lady tells. Her unintellectual German father—related to Christoph Martin Wieland, whose early narrative poem *The Trial of Abraham* was one of Brown's sources—becomes entranced by a book about an obscure Huguenot sect, convinces himself "that it was his duty to disseminate the truths of the gospel among the unbelieving nations" (1), and emigrates to Pennsylvania in the 1760s to pester the Native Americans. Instead, he buys a farm, works it with slaves, and builds an open-air temple ("fane") on a hill to commune with his god. When Clara is six, her father goes up there one night at midnight and is mugged and set afire amidst "a cloud impregnated with light"—a weird incident never fully explained. After his death, Clara's older brother Theodore takes over the farm, raises a family, and reconsecrates the temple to Reason. (He installs a bust of Cicero on a pedestal.) But he seems to have inherited his father's religious mania, and in an imagined deal with his god to gain more immediate access to the divine presence, he fulfills his god's demand for an Abrahamic sacrifice by strangling his wife and slaughtering his children (*and* an abandoned teenage girl staying with them). The maniac is captured and imprisoned, but he escapes with the intent to kill his sister (per further divine orders), but is prevented by a . . . uhm . . . traveling ventriloquist named Francis Carvin, who has been spooking the others for months with mysterious voices.[25] Impersonating Theodore's god, Carvin tells him the whole sacrifice thing was a mistake, whereupon Theodore commits suicide, and Clara collapses

into existential despair. “I leave you to moralize on this tale,” Clara writes in the novel’s final paragraph.

One inescapable moral is that religious belief is a form of mental illness; its symptoms are a desire to be closer to a deity and to accept any orders, as crazy as they may sound: “O! that I might be admitted to thy presence,” Theodore gushes to his god; “that mine were the supreme delight of knowing thy will, and of performing it! The blissful privilege of direct communication with thee, and of listening to the audible enunciation of thy pleasure! [¶] What task would I not undertake, what privation would I not cheerfully endure, to testify my love of thee?” (19). Theodore’s courtroom confession echoes the standard religious vocabulary of the time when he goes on to claim “my deed was enjoined by heaven; that obedience was the test of perfect virtue” (20). The parallel to Abraham’s willingness to murder his son because a voice told him to would have been obvious to any 18th-century reader, who would have been shocked when Clara later compares her insane brother to Christ: “Wieland was transformed at once into into the *man of sorrows*!” (26), italicizing the phrase traditionally associated with Jesus (via Isaiah 53:3) to point the moral. When we hear today of someone who kills others because his god instructed him to do so, we automatically assume he’s insane, and Brown implies that’s how we should regard everyone in the Bible who claimed to hear the voice of their god. (Most of the “divine” instructions Theodore receives originate from inside his head, but one comes from Carvin, whose ventriloquist act recalls Unca Eliza’s in *The Female American*, suggesting that prophets and priests are little better than hucksters, if not deluded themselves.) In a lengthy letter on religion, Brown told a friend, “I really think Christianity, that is, belief of the divinity of Christ and future retribution, have been pernicious to mankind,”[26] and *Wieland* is one one of the most forceful dramatizations of that view in 18th-century literature. But unlike Voltaire, who felt the same way, Brown doesn’t recommend Enlightenment thinking as a substitute: all the major characters come to distrust rational thinking and even the evidence of their senses when they realize how wrongly they have misinterpreted everything. For Brown, the world is inexplicable, and any belief system that tries to explain the world, rationally or supernaturally, is merely a comfortable lie.

Brown favorably reviewed the second edition of Belknap's *Foresters*—note that it and *Wieland* have the same subtitle: *An American Tale*—and likewise intended his novel to be read as an allegory of the young republic, which at the time he wrote was embroiled in partisan bickering and a religious revival. (*Plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose*.) Early in the novel, Theodore's rationalist brother-in-law tells him that "to make the picture of a single family a model for which to sketch the condition of a nation was absurd" (4), but Brown does exactly that, as numerous critics have argued. For Bill Christophersen, Clara's drama "suggests the larger drama of a republic in transition, beset by postrevolutionary conflict and threatened by her own revolutionary heritage," and Roberta Weldon feels, "in the failure of this family it is possible to see a failure of the national experiment."[27] Reading *Wieland* leaves us with "a sort of thrilling melancholy" (3), for both America and the human race.

Those same conclusions are even more applicable to *Ormond; or, The Secret Witness* (1799), though the mood here is more "a listless melancholy" than a "thrilling" one.[28] It too is about the deceptiveness of appearances, and how "our limited perceptions debar us from a thorough knowledge of any actions and motives but our own" (27). While *Wieland* is set in the years before the American Revolution, *Ormond* is set mostly between 1793 and 1794, when conservative Americans (Federalists mostly), like their conservative counterparts in England, feared that extreme, revolutionary ideas from France would soon infect the American body politic. Brown's friend Timothy Dwight published a jeremiad a few months before Brown began writing this novel warning of a French "contagion," and asked, "Shall our sons become the disciples of Voltaire, and the dragoons of Marat; or our daughters the concubines of the Illuminati?"[29] Something like this almost happens in *Ormond*: after 16-year-old Constantia Dudley's father is swindled by a trustful-looking man and they move to Philadelphia, she faces a symbolic but also literal "contagion" when a yellow fever epidemic strikes (which did indeed decimate Philadelphia in the autumn of 1793). There she meets a mysterious man named Ormond, a member of the Bavarian Illuminati who would like to make Constantia his concubine. Realizing she's too virtuous to accept that position—currently held by pretty airhead who commits suicide after

Ormond dumps her for Constantia—he suggests marriage, and after she rejects his proposal because of his shady background and outlandish views, he attempts to rape her. Conveniently armed (like Clara in *Wieland*) with a penknife, she kills her assailant and decides to flee dangerous America and move to England with a childhood friend named Sophia, the narrator of the novel (who is telling Constantia's story to an unidentified person named I. E. Rosenberg for unknown reasons).

Less intense and bizarre than *Wieland*, *Ormond* is still unlike any other novel published in America before this. At first it seems as though Brown decided to take a detour down Rowson's Way to portray an admirable virgin in all sorts of distress, "an angelic comforter" as she's described at one point (6). But Constantia is not your typical romance heroine: most glaringly, "She was unacquainted with religion" (18), which is unthinkable in the genre, and in the end, instead of marrying a worthy man, she goes off to the mother country with a woman who returns her almost lesbian affection. Nor is Ormond a typical Richardsonian villain: he's not a rake but an idealist who fought in the Russo-Turkish War and is filled with utopian schemes for the betterment of mankind; on the other hand, he raped a woman during that war and he loves to spy on people—he's the "secret witness" of the subtitle—often resorting to disguises to do so, as in one instance when he dresses up as a Negro chimney-sweep to gain access to Constantia's house—the first blackface performance in American literature. These unconventional protagonists exchange unconventional ideas about marriage, women's rights, and morality—specifically whether the ends justify the means, as violent revolutionaries insist—and as with *Wieland*, it's easy to read *Ormond* as a parable of recent American history and the the tensions of the 1790s, with Constantia symbolizing the young republic and Ormond the *perceived* dangerous designs of foreigners. (In 1798 Congress passed the Alien and Sedition Acts because of imagined people like him.) But the execution is slapdash. Brown wrote this novel at top speed, and there's a first-draft quality to the writing and plotting that detracts from its interesting ideas. Christophersen calls *Ormond* "an experimental novel" (56), but it's more accurate, as Paul Rodgers demonstrates in an essay, to call it an improvised one. Brown was aware of this, for in the preface (which he probably wrote last), he has his narrator explain, "My narrative will have little of that merit which flows from unity of design. You are

desirous of hearing an authentic, and not a fictitious, tale. It will, therefore, be my duty to relate events in no artificial or elaborate order, and without that harmonious congruity and luminous amplification which might justly be displayed in a tale flowing merely from invention." Pretending this is a true story *and* denigrating artful, imaginative works only make matters worse.[30]

The most striking scenes in *Ormond* are those depicting the horrors of the yellow fever epidemic, which recall those in Defoe's *Journal of the Plague Year*. Brown made more extensive use of that material in his longest novel, *Arthur Mervyn; or, Memoirs of the Year 1793*, the first part of which was published in May of 1799. (The second half appeared a year later.) Essentially this is a coming-of-age story as 18-year-old Mervyn leaves the family farm and travels to nearby Philadelphia, confronts unexpected corruption, and learns to live in a world that is far more complicated than he had imagined. But Brown complicates this young-man-from-the-provinces tale both formally and psychologically. The first three-quarters of the novel is written by a Philadelphia doctor who rescues the yellow-feverish Mervyn, nurses him back to health, and induces him to tell his story, largely because in the meantime Dr. Stevens has heard some damaging things about his patient. Mervyn tells his story in two large chunks that take up the bulk of these pages, and then, surprisingly, takes over as author; he thanks Dr. Stevens for writing down his tale thus far, and proceeds to update his story to within a few days of his wedding. His story is outlandish (and too complex to summarize), a series of unbelievable events that even Mervyn admits "resembled the monstrous creations of delirium" (1.12)—and that refers only to his first three days in Philadelphia! Because he controls the narrative—indirectly during the first three-quarters, directly during the last quarter—there's no way to know if Mervyn is telling the truth. (There's no revelation at the end of the true state of things, as in *Wieland* and *Ormond*.) He *appears* to be open and candid, but Dr. Stevens confesses, "Had I heard Mervyn's story from another, *or read it in a book*, I might, perhaps, have found it possible to suspect the truth" (2.2, my italics: the author is signaling to us to suspect the truth of *this* book). Mervyn confidently explains away the various accusations lodged against him, but there are many unverifiable statements and contradictions in his story, not to mention

many incredible coincidences. Near the end he describes himself (with self-deprecatory exaggeration) as "bred in clownish ignorance; scarcely ushered into the world; more than childishly unlearned and raw; a barn-door simpleton; a plow-tail, kitchen-hearth, turnip-hoeing novice" (2.24), and yet his first view of Philadelphia prompts him to quote a few lines from Milton's *Paradise Lost*, and later he tells us he knows Latin well enough to attempt to translate a Tuscan manuscript into English. At times he speaks like a farmboy, but at other times he speaks with such rhetorical sophistication that a *well-educated* woman tells him "your language is so singular that I am at a loss how to answer it" (2.12). Mervyn believes he owes his eventual triumph over corruption his virtuous, candid conduct, and even if his story is 100 percent true, there is something calculated and/or delusional about his conduct that compromises his moral victory.[31]

There's a reckless idealism to many of Mervyn's actions that calls into question both his sanity and the avowed motives for his behavior. Curious as a cat, he's always poking his nose in other people's business and taking it upon himself to improve their lives, which often backfires—fatally in the case of a Quaker family that adopts him during one of his respites from the city.[32] He is duped into burning $20,000 (nearly half a million today) that doesn't belong to him. As Sarah Wood argues, Mervyn is a Quixotic figure in both the positive and negative senses: he is "a republican Quixote whose thoroughgoing advocation of waning ideology collides with the materialistic individualism of 1790s Philadelphia," but "one catastrophic blunder follows the next as Brown's benevolent Quixote repeatedly misreads situations, mishandles rescues, and leaves a trail of devastation and confusion in his wake."[33] Mervyn also seems to have both a death-wish and mother-complex that complicate what is literally a rags-to-riches story: at the end of the novel, he is engaged to a wealthy, widowed, 25-year-old Jewess (he calls her "mamma") whom he met in a bordello, though not in a professional capacity – a great how-I-met-your-mother story if he survives to have kids, for the first thing he tells Dr. Stevens at the beginning of the novel is that, because of "some defect in the constitution" of his mother, all of his older siblings "died successively as they attained the age of nineteen or twenty" (1.2). Mervyn is now 19. Understandably, he

experiences bad dreams and “a nameless sort of terror,” which cast a pall over his success story.

“Some defect in the constitution”; Brown repeats this key word later when he states, “The seeds of an early and lingering death are sown in my constitution” (1.14), and it is tempting to consider Arthur Mervyn (and *Arthur Mervyn*) an allegorical figure (like Constantia in *Ormond*) for the young republic and its defective Constitution. (Another character blames the yellow fever on “a morbid constitution of the atmosphere” [1.17.]) Mervyn notes the unfair disparity between the rich and poor, and Dr. Stevens issues an early warning about the class of schemers that periodically brings the American economy to its knees when he describes a financier named Thetford as

> one of those who employed money not as the medium of traffic, but as in itself a commodity. He had neither wines nor clothes to transmute into silver. He thought it a tedious process to exchange today one hundred dollars for a cask or bale, and tomorrow exchange the bale or cask for an hundred *and ten* dollars. It was better to give the hundred for a piece of paper which, carried forthwith to the moneychangers, he could procure an hundred twenty-three and three-fourths. In short, this man’s coffers were supplied by the despair of honest men and the stratagems of rogues. (2.1).

If the story he tells is true, Mervyn is basically a good person willing to make (and justify) questionable compromises to succeed—he dumps a sweet younger woman after she loses her estate and embraces the older, wealthier woman—though his good intentions often have bad results or mask other motives, as can be said of many of America’s foreign policy adventures over the years. As Christophersen cracks, “The doctrine of Manifest Destiny, for example, manifested not so much the nation’s divine calling as its greed in Sunday garments” (119).

As prescient as *Arthur Mervyn* may be as a diagnostic of America’s moral constitution, the novel is more interesting for its psychological complexity and as Brown’s most successful dramatization of “the delusiveness of appearances” (1.14). Pausing at one point, Mervyn says he will continue to provide “minute descriptions of the objects which I saw and of the

reasonings and inferences which they suggested to my understanding" (1.23), and those "reasonings and inferences"—both Mervyn's and those by other characters *about* Mervyn—predominate as he and others try to make sense of what they see and hear. He is the first to admit that many of his initial inferences turned out to be wrong—which lends credence to his account—but the difficulty, the *impossibility* of judging accurately what one sees, especially when blinkered by psychological complexes and social prejudices, is more convincingly demonstrated here than in *Wieland*, where people were being *tricked* into disbelieving their senses.

Arthur Mervyn is usually classified as a Gothic novel, presumably because of its epidemic scenes of delirium and for the "nameless sort of terror" that haunts Mervyn at the end, though "noir" might be a better classification, given the prevalence of sleazy double-dealings and Mervyn's detectivelike tendency to spy on people and investigate their homes without permission. But I agree with Emory Elliott that *Arthur Mervyn* is more significant as "an anatomy of social and psychological survival which demands from a reader a systematic character analysis."[34] Brown demanded of his readers a more systematic analysis of his protagonist than most novelists of his time, for if read quickly and/or merely for entertainment, the novel might strike readers as "lame and incredible"—the response of some characters to an account of Mervyn's latest actions (2.10). But if read slowly and with attention to all the clues Brown artfully drops along the way, *Arthur Mervyn* emerges as one of the most psychologically complex literary performances of the 18th century, comparable to Moritz's *Anton Reiser* and Godwin's *Caleb Williams*, and anticipating the novels of Hawthorne and Melville.

One of the psychotic expressions of Mervyn's prewedding jitters is an episode of sleepwalking, the first in fiction, I believe. In Brown's time, somnambulism was regarded as a sign of guilt and incipient insanity, as in Lady Macbeth's case, and today is thought to be triggered by stress and psychological conflicts. Brown put this mysterious malady to fascinating use in his fourth major novel, *Edgar Huntly; or, Memoirs of a Sleepwalker* (1799). The novel takes the form of a long letter the title character writes to his fiancée, Mary Waldegrave, whose freethinking brother—and Huntly's best friend—was recently murdered. The fact that this is a first-person

narrative immediately puts us on guard, for Brown has taught us that none of his narrators can be trusted. It begins like a mystery novel as Huntly roams around at night looking for clues; he thinks he identifies the murderer when he comes across an emigrant named Clithero sleepwalking around the area where Waldegrave was murdered. When Huntly coaxes a confession from him, we learn that Clithero actually is guilt-ridden over killing his former patroness/employer back in Ireland. (He is mistaken, yet another sucker for "the delusiveness of appearance," for we later learn the woman recovered from his attack, married a man named Sarsefield—who was once Huntly's tutor: as in all of Brown's novels, everybody is one or two degrees of separation away from everybody else—and is now living in New York.) Then Huntly receives some bad news that sends him over the edge, and he begins sleepwalking out of anxiety for his future and guilt over other matters. (Like the ghost in *Hamlet*, Waldegrave appears to Huntly in a dream and chastises him for not pursuing his case.) At this point, *Edgar Huntly* descends into *Heart of Darkness*.

In one of the most extraordinary scenes in premodern fiction, Huntly wakes in complete darkness in what he later learns is the bottom of a cavern, just outside the civilized limits of his Delaware town. He gradually orients himself, confronts and kills a panther with a tomahawk and eats it raw, climbs out of the cavern and sees a group of sleeping Indians and a bound-and-gagged white girl, rescues the girl and kills the first Indian who comes after him, and gradually makes his way through the dangerous wilderness back to civilization, killing four more Indians along the way and shooting at his former tutor Sarsefield, a member of his rescue party that Huntly mistakes for more Indians. After this incredible journey, Sarsefield greets his exhausted young friend with Christian resurrection imagery —"You were dead. . . . Now, in a blissful hour, you had risen. . . ."[35] However, the ending avoids resolution, as Huntly warned in his first paragraph ("At length the drama is brought to an imperfect close"): Waldegrave's murder is blamed on an Indian, though it's possible Huntly himself is the murderer, and in any case his future is still uncertain, especially when Huntly learns that the uncle he has been living with has just died and he's likely to be turned out of his home penniless. To make matters worse, his misguided attempt at benevolence almost results in the murder of

Sarsefield's wife. We're left with the impression that Huntly's noctambulatory outings are far from over.

In a calculated use of his chosen form, Brown keeps the reader in the dark much of the time: because Huntly is writing to his fiancée, he doesn't have to spell out many things that the reader must consequently struggle to grasp, forcing us to play detective just as he does. We don't even learn that all this taking place in Delaware and that Huntly is the one telling the story until nearly halfway through, and although he is narrating this retrospectively, he doesn't explains things as he goes along, leading us first through the same kind of wrongheaded "reasonings and inferences" that Arthur Mervyn made, and only partially clearing things up at the end. The "reasonings and inferences" other characters make are just as wrongheaded as his: in a sense, everyone is sleepwalking in this novel, except perhaps for the Indians. Huntly hides certain things from his correspondent—specifically the irreligious content of the letters Waldegrave sent him—and he also seems to be hiding things from himself. "Sleepwalking is Brown's crowning metaphor for the trance of unawareness in which we exist and act," Christophersen observes, "a trance made possible by our proficiency at hiding from and rationalizing motives" (138).

The wilderness scenes in *Edgar Huntly* read now like a pulp-fiction adventure story, but they were a startling innovation in Brown's time, and he indulges in some metafictionl back-patting: "The following incidents are of a kind to which the most ardent invention has never conceived a parallel" Huntly brags at the commencement of the cavern episode (16), and near the end of his wilderness adventure, he boasts, "The miracles of poetry, the transitions of enchantment, are beggarly and mean compared with those which I had experienced" (23). These scenes were his contribution to a distinctly *American* kind of fiction, as he explains in his brief but historically important preface:

> America has opened new views to the naturalist and politician, but has seldom furnished themes to the moral painter. That new springs of action and new motives to curiosity should operate, that the field of investigation opened to us by our own country should differ essentially from those which exist in Europe, may be readily conceived. The sources of amusement to the fancy and instruction to the heart that are particular

> to ourselves are equally numerous and inexhaustible. It is the purpose of this work to profit by some of these sources, to exhibit a series of adventures growing out of the condition of our country. . . .
>
> One merit the writer may at least claim: that of calling forth the passions and engaging the sympathy of the reader by means hitherto unemployed by preceding authors. Puerile superstition and exploded manners, Gothic castles and chimeras, are the materials usually employed for this end. The incidents of Indian hostility and the perils of the western wilderness are far more suitable, and for a native of America to overlook these would admit of no apology.

Brown's American Gothic substitutes natural caverns for castle dungeons, Indians for bandits, and subjective dangers for objective ones. One difference, underscored by the novel's unresolved ending, is that Americans *created* their villains when they drove the Indians off their land and dehumanized them as savages, little different from the wild animals that Huntly encounters. He feels some guilt at killing them—less so as he proceeds, however—though he rationalizes this by noting Indians slaughtered his parents and his best friend. But the return to normalcy that concludes most British and European Gothic novels is impossible in an American setting because of the *ab*normal way the invaders took over the land: it's as though a gang Gothic heroines squatted in a villainous baron's castle, forcing him to retaliate. "The incidents of Indian hostility and the perils of the western wilderness" would be explored in greater depth by later American novelists from James Fenimore Cooper onward, but Brown deserves credit for being the first to move beyond the artistically simple captivity narratives to a more complex treatment of the historical and psychological implications of the relationship between the aborigines and the invaders, unresolved to this day.[36]

Edgar Huntly's dark night of the soul represents Brown's bleakest view of human nature (and of the future of America). His earlier novels established that we can't trust others or even our own senses, and here he goes further to suggest that even when we are asleep we are capable of doing mischief, and of descending to savagery in extreme circumstances. The geographic wilderness Huntly wanders is the wilderness of the mind, and a hundred

years before Freud, Brown explored its darkest recesses and brought back frightening reports about the id and superego. Brown's novels complete the arc toward interiority the novel as a genre had been tracing throughout this early-modern period, moving away from exterior events to focus more and more on internal "reasonings and inferences," away from certainty and order toward ambiguity and disorder, the approach more and more literary novelists would take going forward (while commercial novelists would continue to privilege actions over thoughts, closure over open-endedness). Brown's unreliable narrators, daring conceptual metaphors, and expressive forms set him apart from other novelists of the time—American and European—and though these early dispatches from the Twilight Zone were written too quickly to result in polished works of art, they chart a new direction for American fiction, one that would be followed not only by the aforementioned Cooper, Hawthorne, and Melville, but also by Poe, Lovecraft, and any number of 20th-century neo-Gothicists and noir writers.

But like most innovators, Brown wasn't sufficiently appreciated or remunerated for these unusual novels. He took a stab at a different market with two domestic-sentimental novels—*Clara Howard* and *Jane Talbot* (both 1801)—then, after writing about 2,000 pages of fiction in five years, gave it up for political pamphleteering and editorial work. He died less than a decade later at the relatively young age of 39.

One of Brown's unfinished novels, *Memoirs of Stephen Calvert* (serialized 1799–1800), is narrated by a romantic recluse living on the shore of Lake Michigan who admits he was something of a Don Quixote when younger, falling for a woman sight-unseen like the heroes of chivalric romances whom "Cervantes had taught me to ridicule or to disbelieve" (112). Two other American novelists at century's end evoked Cervantes' crazed idealist to address challenges facing the young republic, one written for teenage girls, the other for adults.

Tabitha Tenney (1762–1837) published a conduct book for young ladies in 1799, and the following year moved with her congressman husband to Washington, DC, where she wrote a farcical conduct book in novel form entitled *Female Quixotism, Exhibited in the Romantic Opinions and*

Extravagant Adventures of Dorcasina Sheldon (1801). As the title suggests, it resembles Lennox's *Female Quixote*, though there's no evidence Tenney read that superior novel (or *Don Quixote*, for that matter). Losing her mother at an early age and having access to her father's library, Dorca falls under the spell of the romance novels he owns, which he reads merely "for amusement," not as realistic depictions of life—the fatal mistake his daughter makes. Expanding her name to the more romantic-sounding Dorcasina, the teenager dismisses one sensible suitor because he doesn't talk and write like Sir Charles Grandison, and after that she falls prey to a string of scoundrels who want to marry the homely, novel-addled woman for her money. Though unoriginal, *Female Quixotism* is very funny at times and includes classic bits like disguises, mistaken identities, conniving servants, and more crossdressing than backstage at a drag show.[37]

This antiromance differs from *The Female Quixote* (but resembles *Don Quixote*) first in the age of its protagonist: Dorcasina is 34 when she is courted for the first time by a gigolo, and in her forties for succeeding misadventures, which makes her girlish infatuation with romantic ideals even more ludicrous. As the narrator says, it's difficult to decide "whether Dorcasina was most an object of ridicule or compassion" (2.8), especially since reading novels "has been the delight of my life" (2.8), she gushes, and the only times she comes alive in the novel is when she is treated like the heroine of a romance. (The saddest/funniest scene in the novel is when she talks her maid Betty—her Sancho Panza—into dressing up in her ex-suitor's clothes to imitate his love-talk.) Second, though Dork finally realizes (at age 49) that novels have lied to her, she's not rewarded with marriage to a sensible suitor as in *The Female Quixote* and others of that ilk, novels that, as Sarah Wood notes, repeat "the happily-ever-after formula of the romantic fiction they appear to deride" (168). Though the dangers of novel-reading was a shopworn theme by 1801, Tenney dramatizes the point more forcefully—though not as forcefully as those novelists who killed off their novel-addicts. Addressing in her dedication the same "Columbian young ladies" that Brown did in *The Power of Sympathy*, Tenney regards novels as a gateway drug to seduction, and treats her "sister novel writers" like drug-dealers (and Samuel Richardson as their overlord). "Would to heaven people could find some better employment than thus turning the

heads of inexperienced females," Dorcasina's father rages, and is tempted to commit "to the flames every novel within his daughter's reach" (1.17, 13). At the end, Dorcasina realizes that a neighbor did well to forbid her daughter to read them, and now that the daughter is married (after dressing up as a young soldier a few years earlier to try to lure Dork away from a fortune-hunter, and getting so carried away in her breeches role that she "threw her arms round Dorcasina's neck and almost stopped her breath with kisses, and concluded by biting her cheek so hard as to make her scream aloud" [2.15]), Dork advices her to do likewise and forbid novels to her future daughters: "Withhold from their eye the pernicious volumes which, while they convey false ideas of life and inspire illusory expectations, will tend to keep them ignorant of everything really worth knowing" (2.17). At issue again is the *use* of romance novels: they are to be treated as escapist fantasies, not imitated: they offer an alternative or virtual reality, not an accurate description of life. Tenney doesn't say anything about *realist* novels—she mentions *Roderick Random* at one point, but only to borrow a romantic subplot from it—perhaps because she assumed her female YA audience were as uninterested in novels like Smollett's as Dorcasina was when younger.

Though Tenney based her novel on older British and European models, she does provide some local color to this novel set in Pennsylvania. One reason Dork turns down her first suitor is because she doesn't want to move down to Virginia to "be served by slaves, and be supported by the sweat, toil and blood of that unfortunate and miserable part of mankind" (1.1). Her family has a black steward, who is apparently free, though not free from racial stereotyping: he has spent all his life up north but speaks in a crude dialect like a southern slave just off the boat from Africa. Skulking in the background are a few Indians, whom the servants regard as savages. Tenney also comments on America's gene pool, criticizing a sea captain for giving passage to an Irishman and "never considering what mischiefs have been occasioned to this country by its being an asylum to European convicts, fugitives from justice, and other worthless characters" (1.4). Nor does she approve of the importation of French ideas, railing against "Jacobinism, atheism, and illuminatism": "Those pernicious sentiments, the growth of other climes, have found their way to this once happy country, so justly celebrated for the domestic felicity of its inhabitants" (2.18). That, like her

earlier remark on slavery, sounds less like Dorcasina than Tenney, the wife of a conservative senator. I'd like to think Tenney is being ironic here, allowing her naïve novel-maniac to evoke an earlier America that is as unrealistic and unhistorical as the golden age of chivalry Don Quixote believes in, but I suspect she's as serious as today's conservatives who evoke a pre-1960s America that never actually existed.[38] Nevertheless, *Female Quixotism* is a fun book to read, and though it had no effect – novelists continued to romance female readers, who continued to succumb to their sweet-talk – if it inspired some American girls to leave Rowson's Way for the more realistic novels along Corncob's Way, so much the better. There, taking up four lanes, they would have encountered the first Great American Novel.

Modern Chivalry, an 800-page novel published in installments between 1792 and 1815, was written by a Pennsylvanian lawyer and politician named Hugh Henry Brackenridge (1748–1816). Born in Scotland, Brackenridge enrolled at Princeton in 1768, and two years later co-authored with classmate and poet Philip Freneau a short novel entitled *Father Bombo's Pilgrimage to Mecca*, a literally sophomoric satire about a fellow student who is sent by Muhammad on a pilgrimage to Mecca in punishment for plagiarizing a poem by Lucian. A freewheeling satire in the spirit of Rabelais, Cervantes, and Swift, *Father Bombo's Pilgrimage* would be a candidate for the first American novel had it been published in 1770 instead of merely passed around among Princetonians. A year later, Brackenridge recited at their graduation address a poem also cowritten with Freneau entitled "The Rising Glory of America," which predicted great things for the country:

> Paradise anew
> Shall flourish, by no second Adam lost,
> No dangerous tree with deadly fruit shall grow,
> No tempting serpent to allure the soul
> From native innocence. . . .
> . . . The lion and the lamb
> In mutual friendship linked, shall browse the shrub
> And timorous deer with softened tigers stray

O’er mead, or lofty hill, or grassy plain.

But 20 years later, this vision of paradise looked more like hell, with the lion and the lamb suing each other over legal possession of that shrub, and the timorous deer pulling a fast one on the softened tiger. Drawing upon his experience as a lawyer, newspaper editor, and politician, Brackenridge decided in 1790 to satirize those citizens who were abusing democratic ideals and questioning the Constitution, first in the form of a Hudibrastic poem called *The Modern Chevalier*, which he abandoned for a Cervantine narrative entitled *Modern Chivalry*. This rambling, entertaining “caricatura” (as the author calls it) features an idealistic but eminently sane Pennsylvanian named John Farrago and his “bog-trotter,” an indentured servant named Teague O’Regan. Here’s Petter’s précis: “Captain Farrago leaves his farm to see how America is making out in its newly-won independence and its experiment in democracy. He soon discovers, thanks to the behavior of his Irish servant Teague Oregan and the apparent affinity between Teague and the people, that there is as yet only a limited awareness in America of the workings of democracy and of the individual self-control required to develop reliable institutions in a democratic government” (443–44). The resemblance between America in the 1790s and today is amazing; the needle hasn’t moved an inch when it comes to the quality of our politicians or the “limited awareness” of the majority of citizens; it’s clear this “experiment in democracy” is never going to work, certainly not as its framers intended.

Modern Chivalry consists of seven volumes that were published in four units, each with a different thematic emphasis: the first three volumes (1792–93) focus on the problem of electing unqualified people for public office as Teague is championed by the citizens of Philadelphia for various positions and memberships, compounded by his willingness to assume these positions out of vanity and ambition regardless of his lack of qualifications. Farrago manages to talk him out of each of these positions by pointing out how much work and/or humiliation will be involved, not to mention the slight problem that Teague can’t read or write. In the short volume 4 (1797) Teague meets President Washington, who appoints him as an excise tax-collector in western Pennsylvania, where (in a dramatization of the Whiskey Rebellion of 1794) he is promptly tar-and-feathered. In that

condition he is then sold to the American Philosophical Society as an exotic animal; they had previously invited him to join their organization, and after writing a scientific paper on the feathered mammal, they loan him to their fellow scientists in France, where Teague witnesses the failure of the French Revolution. He returns to America years later in volumes 5–6 (i.e., part 2, vols. 1–2; 1804–5) and rejoins Captain Farrago, who is so upset at the constitutional reform frenzy in the air he leaves for a fresh start in a western Pennsylvanian frontier town. He is elected governor and Teague improbably becomes a newspaper editor, a satire on those engaging in tabloid journalism. These volumes are mostly a defense of the legal profession and the judiciary, which were under attack at the time by radicals *and* by President Jefferson, whose austerity measures after the wasteful Adams presidency are also criticized. Ten years passed before the appearance of the seventh and final volume (1815), which is the goofiest, most allegorical volume as voter qualifications are satirized; the yahoos of western Pennsylvania not only want to extend voting privileges to animals, but agree to educate them and allow them to practice law and enter politics. Eventually Farrago talks them out of this—but not before some hilarious courtroom scenes between snarling animal-lawyers—and wins the respect of the dimwitted citizens, who encourage him to look for a wife. There Brackenridge leaves him, leaving open the possibility of writing another volume (in which Teague is sent to England as an ambassador), but death, like an unsympathetic editor, canceled his contract.

Brackenridge intended his novel to be a kind of conduct book, a citizen's guide to participatory democracy in the young republic. Most chapters are followed by ones labeled "Observations," mini-essays that expand on the point of the preceding fiction chapters, not unlike Fielding's prefatory essays in *Tom Jones*, which Brackenridge admired. They seem to be written by Brackenridge *in propria persona*, close but not identical to the persona who narrates the fiction chapters; as Wood cautions, "locating any stable or authoritative voice proves impossible in *Modern Chivalry*, an encyclopedia of contradictory public opinions, distinguished by a polemical tone and a shifting ironic stance" (99). The novel covers a wide range of social concerns: horse-racing, medical practices, elections, psychics, fraternal and professional organizations, preaching, dueling, Indian treaties, political corruption, biblical literalism, patriotic mythicization, suicide, racial

diversity, immigration, Christian doctrinal history, demagoguery, slavery, women's bad taste in men, etiquette, class warfare, superstition, freedom of the press, mob mentality, revenge, madness, education, economics, suffrage, etymology, education, and virtually every aspect of the law, from admissible evidence and testimony to the legality of capital punishment. (Except for maybe dueling and etymology, every one of these is *still* a hot topic, another example of how little the country has progressed.) Brackenridge viewed his novel as a kind of homemade Encyclopedia Americana, as he indicates in the especially digressive final volume, where he pursues all sorts of subjects: "The preceding dissertation on the origin of the languages of Europe, and incidentally upon other subjects, may seem incongruous with the nature of this work did it not occur to a diligent observer that there can be nothing incongruous, or inconsistent, with a book which embraces all subjects, and is an encyclopedia of the sciences. It is an opus magnum which comprehends law, physic, and divinity. Were all the books in the world lost, this alone would preserve a germ of every art."[39] The narrator is exaggerating, as he often does, but like Swift with his *Drapier's Letters*, Brackenridge wanted to write a book that would influence citizens and policy, not merely satirize them from an aesthetic distance, and in the novel's final chapter he flatters himself "that it is not a little owning to this book, published in portions from time to time, that a very different state of things now exists" (533), at least in Pennsylvania, for a little while.

Swift was one of Brackenridge's main models; in one of many metafictional asides when the narrator comments on his work in progress, he notes that his style was "formed on the model of Xenophon, and Swift's *Tale of a Tub* and *Gulliver's Travels*" (49). Elsewhere he broadens the list to include Lucian, Rabelais, Scarron, Cyrano de Bergerac, Lesage, Arbuthnot, Fielding, Voltaire, Sterne, and Smollett. (*Humphry Clinker* is the latest novel mentioned in *Modern Chivalry*; Brackenridge had a low opinion of "the modern novel" [346].) He tells us he modeled its encyclopedic breadth on late-classical miscellanies like Athenaeus's *Learned Banqueters* and Aulus Gellius's *Attic Nights*. But the presiding influence is of course *Don Quixote*, not only in the master/servant pairing, the dramatized conflicts between idealism and reality, and the episodic, road-trip structure, but in its

attitude toward fiction. As I noted at the beginning of this volume, Cervantes' canon dismisses most chivalric novels, but "he found one good thing in them, which was the opportunity for display that they offered a good mind, providing a broad and spacious field where one's pen could write unhindered . . ." (1.47). Brackenridge knew he had "a good mind" and admits about halfway through his novel that "I mean this tale of a captain traveling but a vehicle to my way of thinking on some subjects . . ." (245). Like many of his predecessors (especially Rabelais and Sterne) he employs a variety of literary forms: oration, sermon, scientific report, book review, poems and songs, legal documents, minutes of a town meeting, pantomime, allegory, literary criticism, political speeches, and animal fables—all "to diversify the narration" (495). He set the pattern for later American novels of learned wit that likewise combine different narrative forms with encyclopedic ambitions, such as Irving's *History of New York*, Melville's *Moby-Dick*, Dos Passos's *USA*, Gaddis's *Recognitions*, Pynchon's *Gravity's Rainbow*, Coover's *Public Burning*, Sorrentino's *Mulligan Stew*, Theroux's *Darconville's Cat*, Gass's *Tunnel*, Wallace's *Infinite Jest*, Danielewski's *House of Leaves*, and Vollmann's *Seven Dreams* (still dreaming). European and Irish novels, from *Gargantua and Pantagruel* to *Ulysses*, are routinely cited as precedents for these American meganovels, overlooking the locally grown example that Brackenridge provides.

It is by the standards of these flamboyantly unconventional novels that *Modern Chivalry* should be measured, not by those of the conventional novel. In the sixth volume of *Modern Chivalry*, Brackenridge imagines a conventional-minded critic saying, "If for instance you had taken a youth from his early age and conducted him to manhood, insinuating by example or precept the best lessons, it might have been a schoolbook," that is, a conservative, conventional novel, which didn't interest Brackenridge: "I answer: there has been a great deal of this already, and my mind led me more to give lessons to grown people" (337), not to the YA audience his fellow American novelists catered to. Captain Farrago and Teague O'Regan are not intended to be well-rounded characters, but rather are types—the sensible man versus a representative of the senseless mob—and as a result neither has the personality of Don Quixote or Sancho Panza. The same goes for all the other characters in *Modern Chivalry*, who represent types and professions rather than distinct individuals, which is in keeping with the

novel's semiallegorical mode. Nor does *Modern Chivalry* display the shapeliness of a well-constructed novel; it is deliberately rambling, digressive, and open-ended, a formal analogue to the incongruous, open-ended nature of America during this time. (Between the appearance of the first volume of 1792 and the last of 1815, the United States doubled in size.) The novel is highly realistic in many ways and provides an accurate account of frontier life in the 1790s, but there are numerous flights of fancy, especially in the final volume where the ludicrous question of animal suffrage is entertained, resulting in such statistically improbable phrases as "The pertinacity of the unicorn would be insufferable" (465).[40]

Though John Farrago is a type rather than a character, he is a type that would begin to appear more frequently in American fiction: the independent, nonmaterialistic, often artistic type at odds with mainstream society. In one of his "Observations" interchapters, the author asks himself:

> Why is it that I am proud and value myself amongst my own species? Is it because I think I possess, in some degree, the distinguishing characteristic of a man, a taste for the fine arts; a taste and characteristic too little valued in America, where a system of finance has introduced the love of unequal wealth, destroyed the spirit of common industry, and planted that of lottery in the human heart, making the mass of the people gamblers, and under the idea of speculation, shrouded engrossing and monopoly everywhere. (197–98)[41]

In a fine essay on this theme, Wendy Martin notes that Farrago is the first of many alienated American characters like "Natty Bumpo, Huck Finn, Ishmael, Miles Coverdale, Nick Carraway, Nick Adams, Augie March, Joe Christmas, and Stephen Rojack . . . who must establish value systems on the basis of their own experience" (242), systems at odds with the values of the majority and that often force him to light out for new territories, as Farrago does in the second half of *Modern Chivalry*. There the captain is able to talk the townspeople into coming around to his way of thinking about democracy and responsible citizenship at the end of the novel, and Brackenridge hoped *Modern Chivalry* would have the same effect on the

American populace. It didn't. But it did set a pattern for the alienated, quixotic figure who remains a staple of the American novel.

Brackenridge complains in the early volumes that his novel was slow to take off—he was disappointed there were no negative reviews because he had a fiery response all ready, which he printed anyway in volume 3—but when the final volume appeared in 1815, he claimed that in Pennsylvania "there is scarcely a parlour window without a *Modern Chivalry*" (545). During the first half of the 19th century it was "universally popular throughout the South and West," Henry Adams wrote at the end of the century, for it was "more thoroughly American than any book yet published" and "filled the place of *Don Quixote* on the banks of the Ohio and along the Mississippi" (86–87). But this Yankee Doodle *Quixote* eventually fell out of favor—partly because it was replaced by abridged, bowdlerized editions—and has never regained its rightful place as the first great American novel.

But with *Modern Chivalry*, the American novelist, like America itself, was ready to compete with the rest of the world. Brockden Brown showed that an American novel could be as psychologically complex as any novel written in England or Europe, and Brackenridge demonstrated that it could be as learned as any Old World novel—*Modern Chivalry* is filled with quotations from the Bible, classical literature, Shakespeare, and the best writers of the early-modern period—and could be as funny, if it wanted to. The American novel could be as intellectually rigorous, as roguishly playful, as socially conscientious, and as technically innovative, with the added novelty of being set in a new world with new challenges. Though none of these early American novels is an unquestioned masterpiece on the same scale as those published elsewhere during this period, it wouldn't be long before an American novelist would come along to produce one. There's a feller with a whopper about a whale.

Notes

1 Page 3 in Derounian-Stodola's anthology of *Women's Indian Captivity Narratives*, where *A True History* occupies pp. 7–51.

2 She quotes Psalm 46:8. As Howard Zinn notes, the Puritans quoted another verse from Psalms (2:8) to justify stealing the Indians' land: "Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession" (14). In another perverse appropriation of scripture, the original seal of the Massachusetts Bay Colony depicts a fig-leafed Indian pleading "Come over and help us," adapted from Acts 16:9.

3 If interested, see Larkin's "Cosmpolitan Revolution" for a reading of *Letters from an American Farmer* as a novel.

4 But again, if interested, see Davidson's recent essay in *Novel* for a discussion of the "hybrid form" of this popular book.

5 On page 25 of Howard's long introduction to her sumptuously annotated edition of *Harriot Stuart*. At the end of her writing career, Lennox wrote another novel with the same setting—upstate New York in the 1740s—entitled *Euphemia* (1790), which Howard has also edited (Broadview, 2008).

6 It was first published in London, as were many other books written by Americans at this time. It was reprinted in succeeding years not in England but in the United States, by small presses in Massachusetts (c. 1800) and Vermont (1814). Ironically, the only modern edition (2001) was published in Canada, by the invaluable Broadview Press.

7 By editor Carl F. Clink (1961), quoted in Edwards's introduction to her edition of *Emily Montague*, xvii; hereafter cited by letter number. A nitpicking Canuck might bestow that honor instead on *The Golden Fleece* (1626) by William Vaughan, a satiric allegory set in Newfoundland, where the Welsh writer lived from 1622 to 1625.

8 Elias's 1941 essay "The First American Novel" is reprinted in McMahon's 1943 edition of *Alonso*.

9 Page viii; the novel itself will be cited by chapter. "The" was added to the front of the title in this 1976 edition.

10 Pope, "First Epistle of the Second Book of Horace Imitated," l. 150. Perrin supplies a few footnotes (though not here), but a better-annotated edition of this allusive novel is needed.

11 See Brady and Handler for a discussion of the Barbados chapters and whether the author actually visited there.

12 Letter 12 in Kable's scholarly edition, hereafter cited by letter (except for his introduction).

13 *Werther* is also a prop in one of the suicide scenes in *The Hapless Orphan* (1793), a lurid, anonymous, American epistolary novel set at Princeton, suggesting Goethe's novel was as popular in the U.S. as in England and Europe.

14 From his obituary, reprinted in Kable's introduction, xxx. Brown had recently turned 23 when his novel appeared, and died at 27.

15 Because of its status as the first American novel, this slight novel has received a heavy amount of critical commentary; for an informative reading of both Brown's novel and the the debate over the concept of "the first American novel," see chapter 5 of Cathy Davidson's magisterial *Revolution of the Word.* Both novel and concept are investigated in another wide-ranging study of this period, *The Early American Novel* by Henri Petter, who includes a 60-page appendix in which he plot-summarizes virtually every American novel published between 1775 and 1820. In his opinion, only three novels published during this period "emerge slightly above the contemporary average": Hannah Foster's *Coquette* (1797), Rebecca Rush's *Kelroy* (1812), and John Neal's *Keep Cool* (1817), which does indeed sound pretty cool.

16 The first nine letters were serialized in the *Columbian Magazine* (1787–88); two more letters were added to the second edition of 1796 edition, updating the story to include the French Revolution and other recent events. The novel will be cited by letter number.

17 Originally it was entitled *Charlotte: A Tale of Truth*, but it was renamed *Charlotte Temple* beginning with the third American edition of 1797. As its cheerleading critics are fond of repeating, it went through at least 160 editions before the Civil War, as though popularity had anything to do with literary achievement.

18 Of the 10 novels Rowson wrote—*Charlotte Temple* was her fourth—the most ambitious is *Reuben and Rachel* (1798), a multigenerational historical novel that implies Americans are the literal descendants of Christopher Columbus, a paternity not all of us would want to claim. It too was aimed at young readers, Rowson tells us her in her preface, in the hope of arousing "a curiosity that might lead them to the attentive perusal of history in general, but more especially the history of their

native country." Her target demographic would have been better served by *The Foresters*.

19 Letter 19 in the Broadview edition, hereafter cited by letter.

20 1.2; here Tyler imitates 17th-century orthography, an example of the parodic showpieces common to Menippean satire.

21 See Pangborn for a thorough reading of this scene and its implications.

22 Tyler left unfinished a second novel entitled *The Bay Boy* in which Underhill provides a more detailed account of growing up in New England. What survives is quite entertaining, and it's a pity he didn't complete it. The novel is previewed in 1.16 of *The Algerine Captive*, the chapter with the epigraph from *Tristram Shandy*.

23 Why Brown abandoned the law is made clear by a paralegal in one of his novels: "He was perpetually encumbered with the rubbish of the law, and waded with laborious steps through its endless tautologies, its impertinent circuities, its lying assertions, and hateful artifices. . . . It was one tedious round of scrawling and jargon; a tissue made up of the shreds and remnants of barbarous antiquity, polluted with the rust of ages, and patched by the stupidity of modern workmen into new deformity" (*Ormond*, chap. 2).

24 Chap. 16 in *Three Gothic Novels*, where *Wieland* occupies pp. 1–227. This 900-page volume, first published in 1998, gathers three of Brown's four major novels (*Wieland, Arthur Mervyn*, and *Edgar Huntly*); the fourth (*Ormond*) would have pushed the page-count only up to around 1,150 pages, well below the 1,500-page average of the earliest volumes in the Library of America. It has been distressing over the years to watch them shrink in size (while the prices increase).

25 Brown calls him a "biloquist," one who can speak with two different voices, and began a sequel to *Wieland* about him that he never finished (which is included in some editions of *Wieland*, but not the Library of America). Carvin is obviously a figure for the writer—Brown "impersonates" Clara's voice throughout the novel—but he is also the "mysterious stranger" that intervenes in so many American fictions, from Twain's novella of that name to Gaddis's *Carpenter's Gothic*. On this motif, see Roy R. Male's *Enter, Mysterious Stranger: American Cloistral Fiction* (Norman: U Oklahoma P, 1979), who discusses *Wieland* briefly on p. 11.

26 Dated 24 October 1795, quoted in Rosenthal's introduction to *Critical Essays on Charles Brockden Brown*, 12.

27 *The Apparition in the Glass*, 36–37; Christophersen quotes from Weldon's 1984 essay on p. 184n10.

28 Chap. 2 in the Hackett edition of *Ormond*, hereafter cited by chapter. This edition conveniently includes the novella *Alcuin* as well, complementing *Ormond*'s treatment of women's issues.

29 Quoted by Christophersen, 63.

30 On the up side, Constantia encouraged me to learn how to make a "hasty pudding": boil two cups of water while mixing ½ cup of yellow corn meal into a cup of cold water. Add mix to boiling water, reduce heat, and stir frequently for 10–15 minutes. Pour onto a plate and allow to set for 10 minutes, then garnish with honey and/or cinnamon.

31 Some of these contradictions may have been unintended by Brown. As with his other novels, he wrote this one quickly and in-between other literary projects, and he may be confessing to his improvisational approach to writing when Mervyn praises a pianist who plays without a score: "though her bass might be preconcerted, it was plain that her right-hand notes were momentary and spontaneous inspirations" (1.5). See Christophersen for a clever reading of this passage, in which he suggests Mervyn learns from this piano recital to be ambidextrous when confronting life's challenges (93–95).

32 Brown complicates the standard Edenic country/hellish city dichotomy with instances of corruption in the country and benevolence in the city.

33 *Quixotic Fictions of the USA*, 139, 152. In modern terms, "republican"=Democrat, and Federalist=Republican.

34 From his perceptive essay in Rosenthal's *Critical Essays on Charles Brockden Brown*, 160. But he doesn't seem to realize Dr. Stevens is only teasing Mervyn when he describes his fiancée in derogatory terms, as Mervyn indicates: "Pray, my friend, said I anxiously, jest not" (2.24).

35 Chap. 23 in the Library of America edition, where *Edgar Huntly* occupies pp. 639–898; hereafter cited by chapter.

36 In his original preface to his second novel, *The Spy* (1821), Cooper acknowledges Brown was the first American novelist "of any celebrity" to set a story on the American frontier, but he dismisses *Edgar Huntly* as unrealistic, which is accurate: it is unreal, mythic, allegorical, Gothic,

nightmarish—all reasons why it is read (and written about) more often today than *The Spy*.

37 Another book published at this time, *The Female Review* by Herman Mann (1797), features a woman who disguises herself as a man to fight in the Revolutionary War, but since it's more a sensationalized biography of a real person than a novel, I decided to skip it.

38 In their introduction to the Oxford edition I've been citing, Nienkamp and Collins note that three-term Senator Tenney "opposed on every single vote the election of Jefferson as president. He also voted for the continuation of the Alien and Sedition Act, used to suppress political dissent during the Federalist era" (xxvi). There's every indication Tabitha Tenney shared her husband's views.

39 Page 476 in White's definitive edition. The 800-page figure I mentioned earlier refers to Claude Newlin's 1937 edition, which until recently was the only complete edition available. By using a large format and a tiny point size, the White edition crammed the novel into 535 pages. I'm citing it by page number rather than by volume/chapter because Brackenridge's system of chapter enumeration is too idiosyncratic, not to mention inconsistent: part 2 jumps from volume 2 to 4, and in volume 4 there are two chapter 15s—perhaps an homage to *Tristram Shandy*, which *Modern Chivalry* resembles in a number of ways.

40 Then again, truth is stranger than fiction: on the same day I read Brackenridge's account of the election of a monkey and a dog to political office, I learned that a small town in Alaska elected a cat named Stubbs to be mayor 15 years earlier, because its citizens "didn't like the mayoral candidates" on the slate then: see (with the inevitable pun) "Alaska Town: Feline Mayor Is the Cat's Pajamas," *New York Times*, 14 July 2012.

41 White defines "shrouded engrossing" as "the practice of manipulating the market by buying large quantities of a commodity to raise the price." As I said, nothing's changed.

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1509	*Fortunatus*	anonymous	German	55–56
1510–11	*Till Eulenspiegel*	Hermann Bote?	German	56–57
1557	*The Golden Thread*	Jörg Wickram	German	58
1575/1590	*Geschichtklitterung*	Johann Fischart	German	58–59
1587	*The History of Dr. Johann Faustus*	anonymous	German	60
1595/1619	*The Civil Wars of Granada*	Ginés Pérez de Hita	Spanish	32–33
1605/1615	*Don Quixote*	Miguel de Cervantes	Spanish	2–18
1605	*La pícara Justina*	Francisco López de Úbeda	Spanish	23–25
1605	*Another World and Yet the Same*	Joseph Hall	Latin	158–58
1605–7	*Euphormio's Satyricon*	John Barclay	Latin	151–53
1607	*Dobson's Dry Bobs*	anonymous	English	543–45
1607/1613	*The English Arcadia*	Gervase Markham	English	548–49
1607–27	*Astrea*	Honoré d'Urfé	French	171–81
1608	*A Nest of Ninnies*	Robert Armin	English	541–43
1608?	*The Embroidered Couch*	Lu Tiancheng	Chinese	437–38
1608	*Comus*	Erycius Puteanus	Latin	160–61
1608?/1626	*The Swindler*	Francisco de Quevedo	Spanish	25–27
1609	*A Jewel Mirror in Which All Is Clear*	Lochen Gyurmé Dechen	Tibetan	521–23
1609	*The History of Morindos*	anonymous	English	545–46
1612	*La Hija de Celestina*	Alonso de Salas Barbadillo	Spanish	27
1613	*Moriomachia*	Robert Anton	English	546–48

Date	Title	Author	Language	Pages
1614	*Dialogue of the Dogs*	Miguel de Cervantes	Spanish	21–22
1617	*Persiles and Sigismunda*	Miguel de Cervantes	Spanish	18–21
1618	*Marcos de Obregón*	Vicente Espinel	Spanish	29–32
1619	*Christianopolis*	Johann Valentin Andreae	Latin	158
17th C	*The Tale of Hong Kiltong*	Ho Kyun	Korean	492–93
c. 1620	*Zhaoyang Palace*	Guhang yanyan sheng	Chinese	438
1620	*The Sorcerer's Revolt*	Feng Menglong	Chinese	438–40
1621	*Argenis*	John Barclay	Latin	153–56
1621–26	*Urania*	Mary Wroth	English	549–58
1622?	*Francion*	Charles Sorel	French	182–86
1623	*The Story of Han Xiangzi*	Yang Erzeng	Chinese	441–44
1624	*A Sixth Book to Arcadia*	Richard Beling	English	558–59
1624/1627	*New Atlantis*	Francis Bacon	Latin	158–59
1624–26	*Alonso*	Jerónimo de Alcalá Yañez	Spanish	27–28
1620s	*Lost Tales of the True Way*	Fang Ruhao	Chinese	444–45
1620s	*Later Tales of the True Way*	Fang Ruhao	Chinese	445
1620s	*The Man in the Moon*	Francis Godwin	English	560–62
1627–28	*The Extravagant Shepherd*	Charles Sorel	French	186–91
1628	*Ying-yang Dreams to Caution the World*	Chang'an Daoren	Chinese	445
1629/1638	*Polexander*	Marin Le Roy de Gomberville	French	193–98

Date	Title	Author	Language	Pages
1631	*The Merry Adventures of Emperor Yang*	Qidongyeren	Chinese	445–46
1632	*Dorotea*	Lope de Vega	Spanish	34–36
1632	*The Pinder of Wakefield*	anonymous	English	562
1632	*Ariana*	Jean Desmarets	French	193
1633	*Forgotten Tales of the Sui*	Yuan Yuling	Chinese	446
1634	*The Dream*	Johannes Kepler	Latin	159–60
1637	*The Enchantments of Love*	María de Zayas	Spanish	39–42
1639?	*The Jealous Wife*	Fuci Jiaozhu	Chinese	446–47
1640	*Alexto and Angelica*	Alexander Hart	English	563
1640	*The Two Lancashire Lovers*	Richard Brathwaite	English	563–65
1640	*Dodona's Grove*	James Howell	English	565–66
1641	*El Diablo cojuelo*	Luis Vélez de Guevara	Spanish	28
1641	*The Tower of Myriad Mirrors*	Tung Yueh	Chinese	447–51
1641	*Ibrahim*	Madeleine de Scudéry	French	204–8
1642–45	*Cassandra*	Gautier de Costes de La Calprenède	French	198–201
1644	*La Vida de Don Gregorio Guadaña*	Antonio Enríquez Gómez	Spanish	28
1646	*Estebanillo González*	Geronimo de Bran?	Spanish	28–29
1647	*The Disenchantments of Love*	María de Zayas	Spanish	42–45
1647	*Argonauticon Americanum*	Johann Bissel	Latin	161

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1647–57	*Cleopatra*	Gautier de Costes de La Calprenède	French	201–203
1648	*Nova Solyma*	Samuel Gott	Latin	161–65
1649–53	*Artamenes (Cyrus the Great)*	Madeleine de Scudéry	French	208–12
17th C	*The Record of the Black Dragon Year*	anonymous	Korean	494
17th C	*The Dravidian Nights Entertainment*	anonymous	Tamil	532
1650	*Amandus and Sophronia*	Samuel Sheppard	English	566–67
1651	*A Continuation of Arcadia*	Anna Weamys	English	559–60
1651	*Garden of Knowledge*	Inayat Allah	Persian	527
1651–57	*The Master Critic*	Baltasar Gracián	Spanish	45–48
1651/1657	*The Comic Novel*	Paul Scarron	French	217–22
1651–69	*Parthenissa*	Roger Boyle	English	567–69
1652	*The Jewel*	Sir Thomas Urquhart	English	582–86
1653–61	*The Princess Cloria*	Sir Percy Herbert	English	570–78
1654–60	*Clelia*	Madeleine de Scudéry	French	212–16
1650s?	*The Fortunate Union*	Mingjiaozhongren	Chinese	454–55
1655	*Theophania*	anonymous	English	569–70
1655	*The School of Venus*	Michel Millot and Jean L'Ange	French	239
1656	*Les Nouvelles françaises*	Jean Regnault de Segrais	French	222–23
1656	*Nature's Pictures*	Margaret Cavendish	English	586–87
1656	*Don Zara del Fogo*	Samuel Holland	English	588–90
1656–58	*La Prétieuse*	Michel de Pure	French	228–29

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1657	*The Carnal Prayer Mat*	Li Yu	Chinese	451–54
1657/1662	*The Other World*	Savinien Cyrano de Bergerac	French	223–28
1659	*Pheronnida*	William Chamberlayne	English	590
1659	*Epigone*	Michel de Pure	French	229–30
1659	*Panthalia*	Richard Brathwaite	English	578–79
1660	*Aretina*	Sir George Mackenzie	English	579–82
1660?	*Dialogues of Luisa Sigea*	Nicolas Chorier	Latin	165–66
1660?	*The Two Fair Cousins*	Tianhua Zhang Zhuren	Chinese	455
1661?	*Marriage as Retribution*	Xizhou Sheng	Chinese	456–59
1661	*Don Juan Lamberto*	Thomas Flatman?	English	582
1662	*The Princess de Montpensier*	Marie-Madeleine de Lafayette	French	242–43
1662	*The Life and Death of Mrs Mary Frith*	anonymous	English	591
1663	*The Case of Madam Mary Carleton*	anonymous	English	591–92
1660s	*Flower Shadows behind the Curtain*	Ding Yaokang	Chinese	459–62
1665	*Pandion and Amphigenia*	John Crowne	English	602n67
1665–71	*The English Rogue*	Richard Head	English	593–95
1666	*The Bourgeois Romance*	Antoine Furetière	French	230–36
1666	*The Blazing World*	Margaret Cavendish	English	587–88
1666	*Tales of the Floating World*	Asai Ryoi	Japanese	502–3
1668	*The Isle of Pines*	Henry Neville	English	602n67

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1668–75	The Simplician Cycle	Hans Grimmelshausen	German	61–71
1669	*Zayde*	Marie-Madeleine de Lafayette	French	243–45
1670	*Le Count de Gabalis*	Abbé de Villars	French	240–41
1671	*The Mock Clelia*	Adrien-Thomas de Subligny	French	236–39
1672	*Don Carlos*	Abbé de Saint-Réal	French	241n63
1672–74	*Memoirs of Sylvie de Molière*	Madame de Villedieu	French	246–49
1673	*The Counterfeit Lady Revealed*	Francis Kirkman	English	592–93
1673	*The Unlucky Citizen*	Francis Kirkman	English	595–96
1675	*The Disorders of Love*	Madame de Villedieu	French	249–51
1678	*The Pilgrim's Progress*	John Bunyan	English	596
1678	*The Princess de Clèves*	Marie-Madeleine de Lafayette	French	251–57
1680	*The Life and Death of Mr. Badman*	John Bunyan	English	597
1680	*Don Tomazo*	Thomas Dangerfield	English	598–99
1682	*The Sovereignty and Goodness of God*	Mary Rowlandson	English	903–4
1682	*The Life of an Amorous Man*	Ihara Saikaku	Japanese	503–7
1682	*The Fair Extravagant*	Alexander Oldys	English	611–14
1682	*German Winter Nights*	Johann Beer	German	72–75
1683	*Summer Tales*	Johann Beer	German	75
1683	Venus in the Cloister	Jean Barrin	French	239–40

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1683	*The London Jilt*	anonymous	English	599–602
1684	*Erotopolis*	Charles Cotton	English	615–16
1684–86	*The Turkish Spy*	Giovanni Paolo Marana	French	290
1684–87	*Love Letters*	Aphra Behn	English	603–7
1685	*Psyche Cretica*	Johann Ludwig Prasch	Latin	166–67
1685	*The Tale of Wankyu the First*	Ihara Saikaku	Japanese	507
1686	*The Life of an Amorous Woman*	Ihara Saikaku	Japanese	507–9
1687	*The Martyrdom of Theodora and of Didymus*	Robert Boyle	English	616–17
1687	*A Nine Cloud Dream*	Kim Manjung	Korean	495–500
1688	*Oroonoko*	Aphra Behn	English	607–11
1688	*Clitie*	Richard Blackbourn	English	617–19
1689–90	*Arminius and Thusnelda*	Daniel Caspar von Lohenstein	German	61
1690	*Hypolitus Earl of Douglas*	Madame d'Aulnoy	French	258–59
c.1690	*Lady Sa's Dismissal*	Kim Manjung	Korean	500
1691	*A Voyage round the World*	John Dunton	English	619–24
1692	*The Female Gallant*	Alexander Oldys	English	614–15
1692	*Incognita*	William Congreve	English	627–30
1692–93	*The Postboy Robbed of His Mail*	Charles Gildon	English	625–27
1693	*Vertue Rewarded*	anonymous	English	630–31
1693	*Olinda's Adventures*	Catharine Trotter	English	631–33

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1696	*The Inhumane Cardinal*	Mary Pix	English	633–34
1696	*Telemachus*	François de Fénelon	French	259–61
1696–97	*Schelmuffsky*	Christian Reuter	German	75–76
1697/1704	*A Tale of a Tub*	Jonathan Swift	English	634–42
1700	*Letters from a Lady of Quality*	Edme Boursault	French	289–90
1702	*The Adventures of Lindamira*	anonymous	English	642–44
1705	*The Consolidator*	Daniel Defoe	English	644–46
1705	*The Ram*	Anthony Hamilton	French	262–64
1707/1726	*The Devil upon Crutches*	Alain René Lesage	French	269–72
1708?	*An Essay towards the Intelligible World*	Thomas D'Urfey	English	646–48
1709	*The New Atalantis*	Delarivier Manley	English	649–51
1709–10	*The Golden Spy*	Charles Gildon	English	648–49
1710	*The Extravagancies of Monsieur Oufle*	Laurent Bordelon	French	257–82
1710–15	*The History of May-flower*	Anthony Hamilton	French	264–65
1710–15	*The Four Facardins*	Anthony Hamilton	French	265–67
early 1700s	*Mahbub ul-Kalub*	Barkhurdar bin Mahmud Turkman	Persian	527–28
1711	*Nüxian waishi*	Lü Xiong	Chinese	463
1712	*The Rose of Bakawali*	Izzatullah	Persian	528–30
1712	*The History of John Bull*	John Arbuthnot	English	652–55

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1713	*Memoirs of the Comte de Gramont*	Anthony Hamilton	French	267–69
1713	*Love Intrigues*	Jane Barker	English	673–75
1713	*The Illustrious French Lovers*	Robert Challe	French	282–86
1713/1737	*Pharsamond*	Pierre Marivaux	French	292–97
1714	*The Adventures of Rivella*	Delarivier Manley	English	651–52
1715	*The Kingdom of Basaruah*	Joseph Morgan	English	904–5
1715–35	*Gil Blas*	Alain René Lesage	French	272–75
1716	*Irish Tales*	Sarah Butler	English	655–56
1719	*Robinson Crusoe*	Daniel Defoe	English	656–62
1719–20	*Love in Excess*	Eliza Haywood	English	675–77
c.1720	*The Tale of the Incomparable Prince*	Tshe ring dbang rgyal	Tibetan	523–27
1721	*Persian Letters*	Charles de Montesquieu	French	287–90
1721	*The Count de Vinevil and His Family*	Penelope Aubin	English	679
1722	*Moll Flanders*	Daniel Defoe	English	662–66
1722	*A Journal of the Plague Year*	Daniel Defoe	English	666–68
1723	*A Patch-Work Screen for the Ladies*	Jane Barker	English	679–81
1723	*Idalia*	Eliza Haywood	English	677–78
1724	*Roxana*	Daniel Defoe	English	668–72
1724	*The Reformed Coquette*	Mary Davys	English	685–86
1725	*Memoirs of a Certain Island*	Eliza Haywood	English	678–79

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1726	*Gulliver's Travels*	Jonathan Swift	English	689–94
18th C	*Mandaramanjari*	Viśveśara	Sanskrit	532
1726	*The Lining of the Patch-Work Screen*	Jane Barker	English	681–85
1727	*The Accomplished Rake*	Mary Davys	English	686–89
1727	*The Court of Caramania*	Eliza Haywood	English	678–79
1728–31	*Memoirs of a Man of Quality*	Abbé Prévost	French	306–14
1729	*The Dunciad Variorum*	Alexander Pope	English	695–96
1729/1741	*The Memoirs of Martinus Scriblerus*	John Arbuthnot and Alexander Pope	English	694–95
1730	*Guwangyan*	Cao Qujing	Chinese	463–64
1731–39	*The Story of Mr. Cleveland*	Abbé Prévost	French	314–17
1731–41	*The Life of Marianne*	Pierre Marivaux	French	297–303
1731–43	*Felsenburg Island*	Johann Gottfried Schnabel	German	76–78
1732	*Letters from the Marchioness de M****	Claude-Prosper de Crébillon	French	321–22
1732	*The Happy Unfortunate*	Elizabeth Boyd	English	699–701
1732	*A Harlot's Progress*	William Hogarth	English	701
1733	*Memoirs of the Twentieth Century*	Samuel Madden	English	702–5
1734	*The Skimmer*	Claude-Prosper de Crébillon	French	322–25
1734–35	*The Upstart Peasant*	Pierre Marivaux	French	304–5
1735	*A Rake's Progress*	William Hogarth	English	702

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1735	*Prince Fan-Feredin in Novelland*	Guillaume-Hyacinthe Bougeant	French	338–41
1735	*Memoirs of the Count of Comminge*	Marquise de Tencin	French	343
1735–38	*Lamékis*	Charles de Mouhy	French	341–43
1735–40	*The Dean of Coleraine*	Abbé Prévost	French	317–18
1736	*The Adventures of Eovaai*	Eliza Haywood	English	705–7
1736–38	*The Wayward Head and Heart*	Claude-Prosper de Crébillon	French	325–28
1737	*Gaudentio di Lucca*	Simon Berington	English	707–9
1737/1755	*The Opportunities of a Night*	Claude-Prosper de Crébillon	French	328–31
1737–40	*Fortunes in the Fire*	Claude-Prosper de Crébillon	French	331–34
1738	*Polite Conversation*	Jonathan Swift	English	697–98
1740	*The Story of a Modern Greek Woman*	Abbé Prévost	French	318–20
1740	*Pamela*	Samuel Richardson	English	709–15
1741	*Shamela*	Henry Fielding	English	716
1741	*Anti-Pamela*	Eliza Haywood	English	716–17
1741	*The Journey of Niels Klim*	Ludwig Holberg	Latin	167–70
1741	*The Story of Madame de Luz*	Charles Pinot-Duclos	French	343–44
1742	*The Sofa*	Claude-Prosper de Crébillon	French	334–37
1742	*The Confessions of the Comte de ****	Charles Pinot-Duclos	French	344–46

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1742	*Joseph Andrews*	Henry Fielding	English	718–22
1744	*The Fairy Doll*	Jean Galli de Bibiena	French	346–47
1744	*Citracampu*	Banesvara Vidyalankara	Sanskrit	532–33
1744/1753	*David Simple*	Sarah Fielding	English	723–26
1745	*Marriage à la Mode*	William Hogarth	English	702
1747	*Letters from a Peruvian Woman*	Françoise de Graffigny	French	347–50
1747–48	*Clarissa*	Samuel Richardson	English	726–42
1747–48	*The Swedish Countess of Guildenstern*	Christian Fürchtegott Gellert	German	79
1748	*Thérèse the Philosopher*	Marquis d'Argens	French	350–53
1748	*Roderick Random*	Tobias Smollett	English	742–45
1748	*Zadig*	Voltaire	French	354, 359
1748	*The World As It Is*	Voltaire	French	354
1748	*The Indiscreet Jewels*	Denis Diderot	French	363–67
1748–49	*Fanny Hill*	John Cleland	English	745–49
1749	*Tom Jones*	Henry Fielding	English	751–58
1749	*The History of the Human Heart*	anonymous	English	749–51
1749	*Charlotte Summers*	anonymous	English	758–62
c. 1750	*The Scholars*	Wu Jingzi	Chinese	465–71
1750	*Harriot Stuart*	Charlotte Lennox	English	906–7
1750	*Peter Wilkins*	Robert Paltock	English	762–65
1750	*Valeh and Hadijeh*	Shams al-Din Faqir	Persian	530–32
18th C	*The Animal Court*	Ando Shoeki	Japanese	510
18th C	*The True History of Queen Inhyon*	anonymous	Korean	500–501
18th C	*Celebrated Cases of Judge Dee*	anonymous	Chinese	464–65

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1751	*Micromegas*	Voltaire	French	354–55
1751	*Pompey the Little*	Francis Coventry	English	766–67
1751	*Peregrine Pickle*	Tobias Smollett	English	767–69
1751	*Betsy Thoughtless*	Eliza Haywood	English	769–71
1751	*Amelia*	Henry Fielding	English	771–72
1752	*The Female Quixote*	Charlotte Lennox	English	772–75
1752	*Captain Greenland*	William Goodall	English	775–77
1752	*Jack Connor*	William Chaigneau	English	777–79
1753	*Ferdinand Count Fathom*	Tobias Smollett	English	779–81
1753–54	*Sir Charles Grandison*	Samuel Richardson	English	781–83
1754	*The Cry*	Sarah Fielding and Jane Collier	English	783–86
1754	*The Happy Orphans*	Claude-Prosper de Crébillon	French	337–38
1754	*Adventures of a Lady's Slippers*	anonymous	English	787
1754	*The Scotch Marine*	anonymous	English	787
1750s	*A Dream of Red Mansions*	Cao Xueqin	Chinese	471–85
1755	*Lydia*	John Shebbeare	English	787
1755	*A Voyage to the Center of the Earth*	anonymous	English	787–88
1755	*The Card*	John Kidgell	English	788–90
1756	*Ephraim Tristram Bates*	anonymous	English	790–91
1756	*Two Orphans*	William Toldervy	English	791
1756/1766	*John Buncle*	Thomas Amory	English	791–97
1758	*Friar Gerund*	José Francisco de Isla	Spanish	48–52
1758	*Henrietta*	Charlotte Lennox	English	827
1758/1763	*The Little House*	Jean-François de Bastide	French	385

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1759	*Candide*	Voltaire	French	360–63
1759	*Rasselas*	Samuel Johnson	English	797–99
1759	*Letters from Juliet Lady Catesby*	Marie Jeanne Riccoboni	French	383–84
1759	*The Countess of Dellwyn*	Sarah Fielding	English	827–28
1759–67	*Tristram Shandy*	Laurence Sterne	English	800–812
1760	*The Savages of Europe*	Robert-Martin Lesuire	French	388
1760	*Ophelia*	Sarah Fielding	English	828
1760	*The Adventures of a Black Coat*	Edward Philips	English	824
1760	*Polly Honeycombe*	George Colman	English	851–52
1760–62	*Sir Launcelot Greaves*	Tobias Smollett	English	819–20
1760/1765	*Chrysal*	Charles Johnstone	English	824–25
1760/1780	*The Nun*	Denis Diderot	French	367–69
1761	*Julie, or The New Heloise*	Jean-Jacques Rousseau	French	377–82
1761	*Almoran and Hamet*	John Hawkesworth	English	847–48
1761	*Rameau's Nephew*	Denis Diderot	French	369–70
1761/1767	*Sidney Bidulph*	Frances Sheridan	English	828–30
1762	*Millenium Hall*	Sarah Scott	English	838–39
1762	*Emile*	Jean-Jacques Rousseau	French	382–83
1763	*The Peregrinations of Jeremiah Grant*	anonymous	English	857–58
1763	*The Nobleman*	Isabelle de Charrière	French	405
1763	*Rootless Weeds*	Hiraga Gennai	Japanese	510–11
1763	*The Modern Life of Shidoken*	Hiraga Gennai	Japanese	511
1764	*Don Sylvio*	Christoph Martin Wieland	German	79–84
1764	*Wilhelmine*	Moritz August von Thümmel	German	92–93

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1764	*The Castle of Otranto*	Horace Walpole	English	867–69
1765	*The Story of Ernestine*	Marie Jeanne Riccoboni	French	384–85
1765	Potpourri	Voltaire	French	355
1765–70	*The Fool of Quality*	Henry Brooke	English	820–21
1766	*The Vicar of Wakefield*	Oliver Goldsmith	English	863–65
1766	*Sir George Ellison*	Sarah Scott	English	839
1766–67	*Agathon*	Christoph Martin Wieland	German	84–88
1766–89	*The Mocker*	Mikhail Chulkov	Russian	762n221
1767	*Nourjahad*	Frances Sheridan	English	848–49
1767	*The Ingenu*	Voltaire	French	355, 358
1767	*The Female American*	anonymous	English	907–9
1768	*The Man with Forty Crowns*	Voltaire	French	355
1768	*The Princess of Babylon*	Voltaire	French	355–56
1768	*A Sentimental Journey*	Laurence Sterne	English	816–18
1768	*Lucilla*	Restif de la Bretonne	French	394–95
1769	*The Letters of Amabed*	Voltaire	French	356
1769	*Emily Montague*	Frances Brooke	English	909–10
1769	*D'Alembert's Dream*	Denis Diderot	French	371
1769	*Adventures of an Atom*	Tobias Smollett	English	825–26
1770	*Diogenes of Sinope*	Christoph Martin Wieland	German	88–90
1771	*The Disguise*	anonymous	English	853–54

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1771	*The Man of Feeling*	Henry Mackenzie	English	865–67
1771	*Humphry Clinker*	Tobias Smollett	English	858–61
1771	*Lugubrious Nights*	José de Cadalso	Spanish	53–55
1771	*The Year 2440*	Louis-Sébastien Mercier	French	385–87
1771	*Lady Sophia Sternheim*	Sophie von La Roche	German	97–99
1772	*The Egg*	anonymous	English	884–86
1772/1776	*The Devil in Love*	Jacques Cazotte	French	387–88
1772	*Supplement to Bougainville's* Voyage	Denis Diderot	French	371–72
1770s	*Jacques the Fatalist and His Master*	Denis Diderot	French	372–76
1773	*The Spiritual Quixote*	Richard Graves	English	822–23
1773–74	*The White Bull*	Voltaire	French	356
1773–76	*Sebaldus Nothanker*	Friedrich Nicolai	German	93–97
1774	*The Sorrows of Young Werther*	Johann Wolfgang von Goethe	German	100–106
1774	*Arsaces*	Charles Johnstone	English	849
1774–80	*History of the Abderites*	Christoph Martin Wieland	German	91
1775	*Lord Chesterfield's Ears*	Voltaire	French	356
1775	*Johnny's Story*	Voltaire	French	356–57
1775	*Adventures of Alonso*	Thomas Atwood Digges	English	910–11
1775–87	*Le Paysan et la paysanne pervertis*	Restif de la Bretonne	French	395–97
1777	*The Excursion*	Frances Brooke	English	830

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1777	*The Old English Baron*	Clara Reeve	English	869
1778	*Evelina*	Frances Burney	English	831–33
1777	*No Tomorrow*	Vivant Denon	French	398–99
1779	*The Sylph*	Georgiana Spencer	English	831
c. 1780	*Yesou puyan*	Xia Jingqu	Chinese	486–87
1781	*The Triumph of Prudence over Passion*	Elizabeth Sheridan	English	839–40
1782	*Those Familiar Bestsellers*	Santo Kyoden	Japanese	512
1782	*The French Adventurer*	Robert-Martin Lesuire	French	388–90
1782	*Cecilia*	Frances Burney	English	833–35
1782	*Dangerous Liaisons*	Pierre Choderlos de Laclos	French	399–405
1782–85	*The 120 Days of Sodom*	Marquis de Sade	French	414–17
1783–85	*The Recess*	Sophia Lee	English	869–70
1784	*Louisa*	Anna Seward	English	854
1784	*Letters of Mistress Henley*	Isabelle de Charrière	French	405–6
1784/1821	*Zaisheng yuan*	Chen Duansheng	Chinese	486
1785	*The Progress of Romance*	Clara Reeve	English	886–88
1785	*Playboy, Roasted à la Edo*	Santo Kyoden	Japanese	512
1785/1787	*Letters from Lausanne*	Isabelle de Charrière	French	406–8
1785/1795	*Aline and Valcour*	Marquis de Sade	French	417–20
1785–90	*Anton Reiser*	Karl Philipp Moritz	German	112–16
1786	*Vathek*	William Beckford	French	849–51

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1786	*The Victim of Fancy*	Elizabeth Sophia Tomlins	English	888–89
1786–89	*The Ghost-seer*	Friedrich von Schiller	German	116–18
1787	*Jonathan Corncob*	anonymous	English	911–14
1788	*Icosameron*	Giacomo Casanova	French	390–93
1788	*Mary*	Mary Wollstonecraft	English	840–41
1788	*The Unseamly Silverpiped Swingers*	Santo Kyoden	Japanese	512
1788	*Paul and Virginia*	Bernardin de Saint-Pierre	French	410–11
1788	*Hermann von Inna*	Christiane Benedikte Naubert	German	118–19
1789	*Zeluco*	John Moore	English	870–71
1789	*The Power of Sympathy*	William Hill Brown	English	914–16
1790	*Young Hocus*	W— L—s	English	889–91
1790	*Julia*	Helen Maria Williams	English	854–56
1790–93	*The Victim of Magical Delusion*	Cajetan Tschink	German	119–20
1790/1794	*Voyage around My Room*	Xavier de Maitre	French	411–13
1791	*Justine*	Marquis de Sade	French	420–24
1791	*Celestina*	Charlotte Smith	English	877–78
1791	*A Simple Story*	Elizabeth Inchbald	English	835–36
1791	*Charlotte Temple*	Susanna Rowson	English	917–19
1791–95	*Horrid Mysteries (The Genius)*	Carl Grosse	German	121–23
1792	*Anna St. Ives*	Thomas Holcroft	English	878–79
1792	*The Necromancer*	Karl Friedrich Kahlert	German	120–21
1792	*The Foresters*	Jeremy Belknap	English	916–17
1792	*It Is, and It Is Not a Novel*	Charlotte Palmer	English	891–93
1792–1815	*Modern Chivalry*	Hugh Henry Brackenridge	English	939–43

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1793	*The Invisible Lodge*	Jean Paul Richter	German	134–38
1794	*The Mysteries of Udolpho*	Ann Radcliffe	English	872–73
1794	*Caleb Williams*	William Godwin	English	879–81
1794–95	*Conversations of German Refugees*	Johann Wolfgang von Goethe	German	111–12
1795	*Hesperus*	Jean Paul Richter	German	138–41
1795	*Susanna*	Susanna Bullock	English	893–94
1795	*Philosophy in the Bedroom*	Marquis de Sade	French	424–26
1795–96	*Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship*	Johann Wolfgang von Goethe	German	106–10
1795–96	*William Lovell*	Ludwig Tieck	German	123–25
1795–1828	*Flowers in the Mirror*	Li Ruzhen	Chinese	487–92
1796	*The Monk*	Matthew Gregory Lewis	English	873–74
1796	*Nature and Art*	Elizabeth Inchbald	English	881–82
1796	*Hermsprong*	Robert Bage	English	882–83
1796	*Three Women*	Isabelle de Charrière	French	408–10
1796	*Emma Courtney*	Mary Hays	English	843–44
1796	*Camilla*	Frances Burney	English	835
1796	*Quintus Fixlein*	Jean Paul Richter	German	141–42
1796	*Modern Novel Writing*	William Beckford	English	894–95
1796–97	*Siebenkäs*	Jean Paul Richter	German	142–45
1797	*Walsingham*	Mary Robinson	English	836–38
1797	*The Italian*	Ann Radcliffe	English	875–76
1797	*Juliette*	Marquis de Sade	French	426–32
1797	*The Coquette*	Hannah Foster	English	919–20
1797	*Azemia*	William Beckford	English	895–97
1797	*The Algerine*	Royall Tyler	English	920–24

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1797–99	*Hyperion*	Friedrich Hölderlin	German	129–30
1798	*The Anti-Justine*	Restif de la Bretonne	French	397–98
1798	*Pauliska*	Jacques-Antoine Révéroni Saint-Cyr	French	434
1798/1803	*Northanger Abbey*	Jane Austen	English	897–902
1798	*Wieland*	Charles Brockden Brown	English	924–27
1799	*Ormond*	Charles Brockden Brown	English	927–29
1799	*Arthur Mervyn*	Charles Brockden Brown	English	929–32
1799	*Edgar Huntly*	Charles Brockden Brown	English	932–35
1799	*The Vagabond*	George Walker	English	883–84
1799	*Lucinde*	Friedrich Schlegel	German	126–29
1800	*Castle Rackrent*	Maria Edgeworth	English	856–57
1800	*Memoirs of Modern Philosophers*	Elizabeth Hamilton	English	844–46
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1800	*Heinrich von Ofterdingen*	Novalis	German	131–33
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1801	*Female Quixotism*	Tabitha Tenney	English	936–38
1801 ff.	*The Adventures of Amir Hamza*	anonymous/Lakhnavi/Bilgrami	Urdu	535–40
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1803	*A Tale of Four Dervishes*	Mir Amman	Urdu	533–35
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1809–13	The Bathhouse of the Floating World	Shikitei Sanba	Japanese	516–17

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